NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

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MBA PROFESSIONAL REPORT

Knowledge of the Military Retirement System Among Naval Postgraduate School Officers and Analysis of Associated Retirement Information Sources

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                   June 2009

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KNOWLEDGE OF THE MILITARY RETIREMENT SYSTEM AMONG NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL OFFICERS AND ANALYSIS OF ASSOCIATED RETIREMENT INFORMATION SOURCES

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ABSTRACT

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I.   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is twofold: to determine whether military retirement information systems are effectively communicating the value of military retirement pay and benefits to their target audience; and to recommend better methods of disseminating information, as determined by a survey of student military officers at the Naval Postgraduate School. Our hypothesis is that military retirement information systems are not effectively communicating the value of retirement pay and benefits to their target audience. This hypothesis is based on the following assumptions:

- The average respondent will answer 40-60 percent of the knowledge questions correctly.
- Retirement-knowledge levels will be relatively lower:
  - among officers who intend to not stay in the service until retirement;
  - inversely with officers' years of service and/or Pay Grade;
  - when communication is word-of-mouth and
  - in the area of non-cash components (vs. cash component).

A.   OVERVIEW

Many government agencies and think tanks have recommended that the Department of Defense (DoD) develop a comprehensive communication and education plan to better disseminate information on military compensation. By closing knowledge gaps through more effective communication about retirement pay and benefits, such a plan would improve both recruiting and retention. Ideally, the plan would emphasize underrated communication modes and replace ineffective methods.

Improvements in officers' awareness of retirement benefits are a valuable objective. Within individuals' given discount rate, the lack of awareness causes people to understate their retirement benefits. Any increase in awareness of those benefits could offset existing cash or non-cash benefits without reducing retention.   Heightened

awareness could also marginally improve potential recruits' perception of the compensation package. The assumption is that people systematically understate their retirement benefits.

With exponentially growing Military Personnel accounts squeezing out other aspects of the military budget, isolating and improving benefits awareness offers a partial solution to the budget squeeze. A key component of that solution would be efficiencies recovered from expected future cost avoidance on Military Personnel accounts.

B.   BACKGROUND

Military compensation is a critical and expensive aspect of maintaining an all-volunteer force. The DoD, Government Accountability Office (GAO), Navy Personnel Research, Studies, and Technology (NPRST), and other governmental agencies have concluded that complexity in the military compensation package for retirement has the adverse effect of causing military personnel to undervalue their benefits. This value gap is most pronounced in the labyrinth of other-than-cash compensation, which accounts for the largest portion of retirement's deferred payments, at 61 percent.

Both volumes of the *Tenth Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation* (QRMC) for 2008 discuss DoD's objectives for military pay's Cash Compensation and Deferred/Noncash Compensation components. The objectives are: 1) to have the right people for the right job; 2) to maintain a certain quality-of-life standard; 3) to consider a more flexible special pay and bonus system; 4) to generate recommendations for improving recruitment and retention; and 5) to address retirement changes and potential effects on uniformed service members.

C.   METHODOLOGY

The primary research methods used in this report were a thorough review of the pertinent literature and a survey of student military officers at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS). The majority of the literature reviewed came from government agencies and government-sponsored research think tanks. Prominent among the government authors were the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the Congressional Research

Service (CRS), and the Department of Defense's Defense Advisory Committee on Military Compensation (DACMC). However, it should be noted that the single most important document on the topic is clearly the *Tenth Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation*. Among the think tanks, RAND Corporation and the Navy-focused Center for Naval Analysis (CNA) contributed significantly to the military compensation literature.

The research cornerstone of this study is a survey of NPS student military officers. The survey was constructed from a framework of basic questions:

- WHAT: A web-based survey was the report's primary research source. The survey asked the officers questions about the retirement system, determined their relative knowledge levels of the system, and discovered the sources on which the respondents relied to acquire that knowledge. The survey consisted of four sections, and the resulting correlations between the sections were primary sources for the report's conclusion. The four sections contained:

  1) basic biographical information questions;

  2) retirement-system knowledge questions;

  3) retirement-information sources assessment questions; and

  4) room for comments and recommendations for information-system improvements.

- WHEN: The survey was conducted during the first few weeks of the NPS Spring 2009 Academic Quarter. The slow period of a new academic quarter was important to soliciting maximum participation.

- WHO: The survey was limited to U.S. military officers in the NPS student body. Pertinent aspects of the sample populations included:

  o The average pay grade for officers was expected to fall between O-3 and O-4, with the mean cumulative number of years of service to come in at approximately 10 years (this aligns with the 2008 NPS Fact Book). This population is particularly relevant due to the widely accepted view that a "tipping point" occurs at a military career's 10-

year mark. At this mid-career point, the likelihood that an officer will stay until retirement increases quickly relative to the first decade of his or her career. The tipping point mean was expected to result in an interesting spread between respondents who intend to retire and those who expect to separate before retirement.

o The competitive nature of military assignments to NPS speaks positively of the career performance and success of the survey sample. It was assumed that the survey group is above average in both career commitment and their respective services' expectation of retaining the officers until retirement.

- WHERE: The NPS student body offered a convenient and appropriate population with desirable characteristics for this study. Its military officers hail from all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces and naturally reflect the diversity of the DoD in its sample. The research-based nature of the school results in a population that is accustomed to and, accordingly, receptive of survey requests. Additionally, the technical nature of most NPS curricula presupposes a sample population that is above average in education. When combined, all of the above characteristics of the NPS student body should represent a military cadre well above the norm and, therefore, a "best case" sample set.

The survey was web-based. High participation rates were expected due to the ease of respondent use and access. Of several acceptable and available online web services, "Zoomerang.com" was selected due to its user-friendly yet powerful interface, powerful analytical reports, and school-sponsored availability.

D.   STUDY BENEFITS

This study provides valuable information on the levels of knowledge that can be expected for the rest of the military. NPS military officers are highly educated relative to the rest of the officer population (Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, 4-15). Accordingly, the survey reflects a higher statistical

average relative to their peers. These insights offer the DoD solid points of reference from which to make wise decisions about the time and money dedicated to educating officers about their retirement benefits. The study outcome offers insights that DoD can leverage into significant cost avoidance from an information awareness campaign. Other expected benefits include reduced costs to the DoD, higher readiness levels, and improved efficiencies in manpower management's "steady-state" levels.

Since the lack of accurate awareness causes people to understate their retirement benefits, it is anticipated that any increase in awareness of benefits could substantially offset existing cash or non-cash benefits (for a given discount rate of each individual) valuation without reducing retention. The resulting improvements in increases directly correspond to targeted accomplishments from QRMC's top five objectives noted earlier.

The bulk of available military retention and recruitment analysis is focused on the military enlisted ranks. This report provides less readily available primary data on military officers' awareness levels, perceptions, and direct recommendations. The study also provides previously unexplored data on officer retention and recruitment analysis.

With exponentially growing Military Personnel accounts squeezing out the Operational & Support and Procurement slices of the military appropriations budget, isolating and improving benefits awareness offer marginal solutions to the military budget squeeze.

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II.   MILITARY RETIREMENT COMPENSATION PACKAGE

> Dig the well before you are thirsty.
>
> - Chinese Proverb

A.   OVERVIEW

The military compensation system applies to members of the U.S. armed forces, including the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard. Most of the retirement provisions also apply to the members of the uniformed services, including the Public Health Service and officers of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) (Defense Manpower Data Center 2004, A-2).

Total military compensation for FY 2006 was $173.2 billion, comprised mainly of cash, noncash, and deferred payments. The military retirement compensation package is the deferred portion of total military compensation (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Department of Defense 2008, 1).

The deferred portion of the compensation was 31 percent, or $53.7 billion, of total military compensation. This is composed of retired pay accrual, healthcare accrual, Veterans Affairs health and other benefits, as well as other undefined deferred benefits (Figure 1) (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Department of Defense 2008, 18). Figure 1 below shows the breakdown of military compensation for FY 2006.
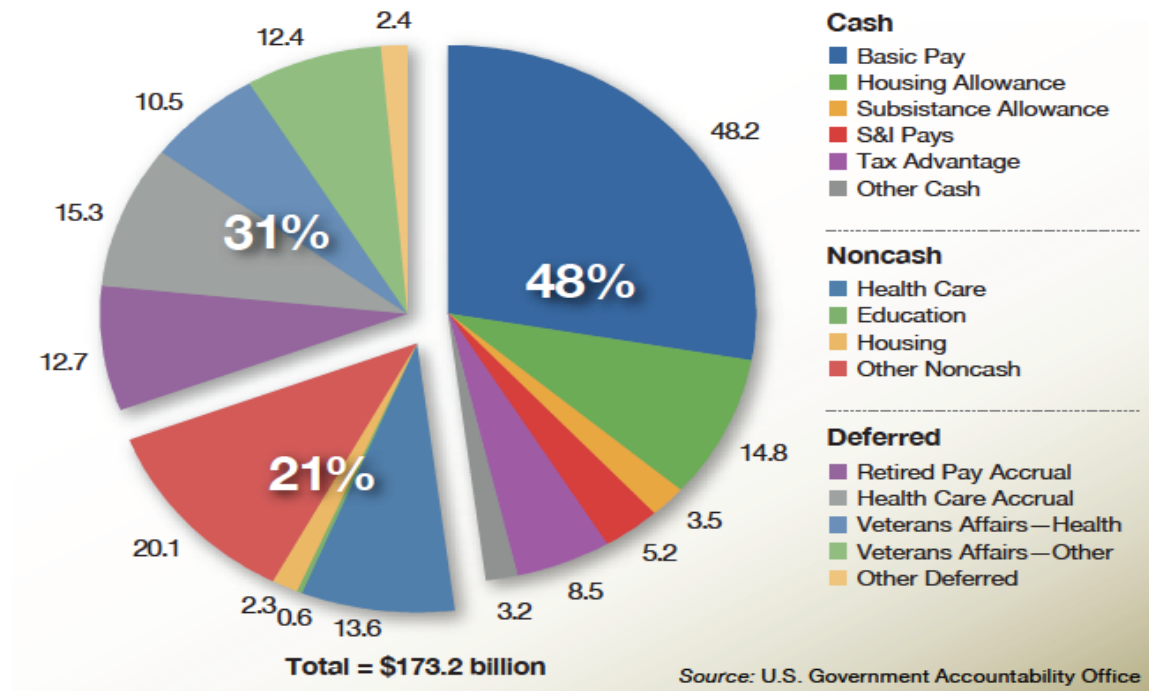
Figure 1.   Major Components of Military Compensation, Fiscal Year 2006

Of the $53.7 billion, DoD contributed in 2006 approximately $12.7 billion or more than seven percent of current active-duty personnel costs to the Military Retirement Fund (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Department of Defense 2008, xii). The remainder is composed of Treasury payments and accrued interest.

The military retirement compensation package is a defined-benefit plan. Unlike the more common defined-contribution plans of the civilian work force, military pensions guarantee predefined payments and benefits in retirement. This type of pension shifts the burden of risk to the government (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Department of Defense 2008, 31).

B. HISTORY

The military retirement system dates back to colonial days. Some of the earliest precedents for military retirement can be traced to the first national pension law of August 26, 1776 (Defense Manpower Data Center 2004, B-2).

In 1870, Congress authored what have become two cornerstone principles of military retirement in an effort to reduce peacetime forces. The first was the option for military officers with 30 years or more of service to voluntarily retire with Presidential approval. The other change allowed retiring Army and Marine Corps officers to maintain a fixed 75 percent of their active duty pay in retirement. In 1873, Congress extended these benefits to the Navy (Defense Manpower Data Center 2004, B-3).

The next major evolutionary reform of the retirement system came with the 1948 Advisory Commission on Service Pay, commonly referred to as the Hook Commission. Its recommendations resulted in

> a substantial pension for long-serving military personnel, and also provided a compelling incentive for personnel to retire from the military once they reached 20 years of service. At the time the retirement benefit was created, there was a concern that too many senior personnel were serving in the post-war force. Providing an immediate and generous retirement benefit to those members with 20 years of service encouraged many senior personnel to retire. (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Department of Defense 2008, 8)

C. FORCE-SHAPING OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the military compensation system (including retirement) is the effective management of human resources. Specifically, the system should (Warner 2006, 3):

- Attract and Retain
- Train
- Sort
- Motivate
- Separate

However, of these recommended force-shaping determinants, only "Attract and Retain" and "Separate" apply to the military-retirement portion of the total compensation package.

The objective of Attract and Retain is to recruit and incentivize a steady-state workforce commensurate with military end-strength requirements. This is the input driver of the manpower system.

The objective of Separate is to encourage military personnel to voluntarily leave on good terms and to provide subordinates with promotion opportunities. This is the output side of the manpower system.

D.   MILITARY RETIREMENT FUND

In light of the growing unfunded liability in FY 1984, the DoD created the Military Retirement Fund. Each year, Congress had appropriated the funds to pay the current retirees as part of the annual defense appropriations bill. Starting in 1985, however, the "accrual accounting" concept took effect and was used to budget the costs of military retired pay. Under the new system, the DoD budgets a contribution—determined by The Department of Defense Retirement Board of Actuaries—to the Military Retirement Fund each fiscal year. Treasury payments and accrued interest also are added to the fund (Figure 2). Retirees are now paid from the accumulated amounts in the Military Retirement Fund rather than from the DoD personnel budget (Henning 2008, CRS-12/13).
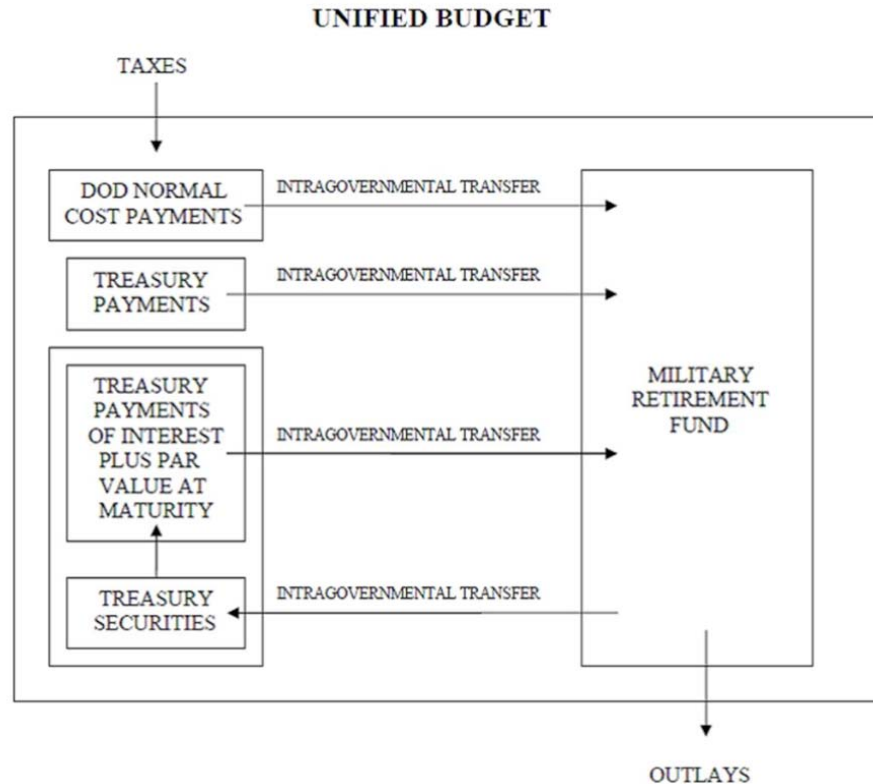
UNIFIED BUDGET

Figure 2.   Unified Budget for Military Retirement Fund. (Defense Manpower Data Center 2004, 27)

E.   CASH COMPONENTS

1.   Annuity

a.   *Final Pay*

The "Final Basic Pay System" is valid only for military personnel who entered service with a DIEMS (Date of Initial Entry to Military Service) or DIEUS (Date of Initial Entry to Uniformed Services) date before September 8, 1980. This retirement-pay computation is based on the final monthly basic pay received during the retiree's last active-duty year. The minimum amount is 50 percent of the individual's basic pay (at 20 years) and 2.5 percent for every year thereafter. "The Final Basic Pay cohort that entered the military before September 8, 1980 will have 29 years of service in 2009 and they are all expected to retire by 2016" (Henning 2008, CRS-4).

b. *"High Three"*

For military personnel who entered military service with a DIEMS or DIEUS date after September 8, 1980, the computation base will be the average of the highest three years of basic pay instead of the final basic pay. Calculations will be the same as under the Final Basic Pay method (Henning 2008, CRS-5).

c. **REDUX/CSB**

Congress believed that the military retirement plan was too generous, and so the Military Retirement Reform Act of 1986 established "REDUX." However, due to criticism from military stakeholders, the FY 2000 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) amended the REDUX system to make it non-compulsory and added a Career Status Bonus (CSB) for participants in the REDUX retirement system. In order to participate in REDUX, service members must have a DIEMS or DIEUS prior to August 1, 1986.

The choice of electing REDUX or High Three must occur within 180 days of reaching 15 years of service. Participants in REDUX receive an immediate CSB—a cash payment of $30,000 (subject to taxes)—in return for a lower overall payout of their retirement pay when compared to participants in the High Three system, who do not receive a CSB (Henning 2008, CRS-5).

2. Tax Advantages

Military members have historically enjoyed tax advantages as part of their total compensation. These tax exemptions are retained, but to a lesser degree, in the retirement compensation package.

Retirees can choose to live in any of the 24 states that exempt military retirement income from state tax. In a worst-case scenario, a state with income tax can impose as much as a 9.3 percent annual state tax burden on the retiree (Franchise Tax Board, State of California, 2009).

3. Other Cash Components

a. *Social Security*

Since January 1, 1957, military personnel have been paying taxes into the Social Security trust fund. However, military personnel have the employee portion of their Social Security subsidized by the government, which lessens their social security tax burden. Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI) grants a noncontributory wage credit of up to $1,200 per year ($100 of credit for each $300 of wages up to a maximum credit of $1,200) only for military personnel. OASDI compensates for quarters (BAH) and subsistence (BAS) wages exempt from Social Security taxation (Defense Manpower Data Center 2004, A-8).

b. *Cost Of Living Adjustment (COLA)*

Title 10 U.S.C. 1401a mandates military retired pay to be protected against inflation. Military retirees under the Final Pay or the High Three retirement system enjoy annual Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) indexed to the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W). Retirees under the REDUX retirement system receive a one-percentage-point smaller COLA adjustment than retirees in the other two retirement systems. The non-institutional nature of the CPI-W index more closely represents the buying habits of military retirees (Henning 2008, 10). This adjustment provides a hedge against inflation that is directly subsidized by the government.

F. NON-CASH COMPONENTS

1. Healthcare Benefits

Military retirees under age 65 are eligible for TRICARE Standard or Extra at no additional cost. However, retirees can pay an extra annual premium of $230 for individual coverage or $460 for family coverage to receive the same level of TRICARE Prime benefits that active duty members enjoy.

Retirees 65 or older are automatically enrolled in TRICARE for Life. TRICARE for Life is TRICARE's Medicare wraparound coverage that covers non-Medicare eligible expenses that would otherwise burden military retirees.

Another form of medical coverage available to military retirees is Veterans' Affairs (VA) healthcare. The VA provides veterans with a range of healthcare services, including long-term healthcare. 87 percent of the VA's long-term care expense is for institutional care, which is provided exclusively in nursing homes. The VA also provides non-institutional long-term care at veterans' homes and other locations in the community (Government Accountability Office 2009, 1).

TRICARE for Life and Veterans' Affairs healthcare combined account for over half of the entire deferred compensation package to retirees.

2. Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP)

The SBP is an insurance-like plan payable as an annuity to eligible beneficiaries upon a military retiree's death. The government and the military retiree share the total cost of the plan. The premium is composed of a reduction in the military retirement income and the government subsidizes the remainder (Military Retirement Fund, Department of Defense 2008, 4).

The survivor receives an annuity equal to 55 percent of the member's base amount. This base amount is determined by the member and cannot be less than $300 or more than the member's full retirement pay. SBP and premiums are also indexed to COLA annually (Military Retirement Fund, Department of Defense 2008, 5).

3. Commissary And Exchange Benefits

Commissary and Exchange benefits are a lifelong benefit to military retirees. Commissaries are the military analogs of commercial grocery stores. Exchanges are the equivalent to civilian retail outlets that can be as small as a convenience store and as large as a shopping mall.

Commissary benefits allow retirees to save, on average, 30 percent, or $2,400 annually, per family of four, when compared to commercially-operated grocery stores. Exchanges save retirees, on average, 11 percent over the competition (DoD Office of the

Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness 2008, 149). All purchases made at commissaries and exchanges are tax free, an average additional saving of 4.9 percent when compared to the national average sales tax.

4. Other Non-Cash Components

a. *Post-9/11 GI Bill*

Although brand-new at the time of this report, the Post-9/11 GI Bill compares favorably to the earlier Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) in both scope and payouts. All military retirees who have not depleted their Chapter 30 MGIB benefits are eligible to transfer the balance of their benefits to the new Chapter 33 Post-9/11 GI Bill. Retirees can transfer their Post-9/11 GI Bill educational benefits to their dependents, according to U.S. Code Title 38, Chapter 33.

Though not intended primarily as a retirement benefit, the eligibility window extends 15 years beyond the date of retirement from service. This contributes to retirement income by offsetting any educational expenses incurred by them or their dependents. At the extreme, the Post-9/11 GI Bill can pay out over $150,000 in tuition and stipends over 36 months.

b. *Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)*

Although military retirees enjoy a defined-benefit plan, military personnel can also participate in a defined-contribution plan that mirrors the civilian 401K. TSP allows military retirees to further supplement their income with deferred tax investments. The contribution total closely mirrors the 401k contribution amounts in the civilian sector, though contribution matching for military is currently not available.

G. VALUATION DISCOUNT RATE

It's a simple economic fact that a dollar today is worth more than a dollar tomorrow. This defines the concept of a discount rate. Therefore, a person with a higher discount rate will value a dollar more today than tomorrow.

Discount rates significantly affect the value of retirement as perceived by military personnel. Multiple sources have validated that higher discount rates are associated with

being younger, having less education, having lower income, having dependents, and being male. Military-specific personal discount rates range from zero to over 30 percent. The norm for enlisted personnel is approximately 15 percent, with officers averaging 10 percent (DoD Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness 2008, 17).

Government discount rates are substantially lower, at 3.0 to 3.5 percent. Unfortunately, from the government's perspective, the higher discount rates of both officers and enlisted are counterproductive. The end result is that the government's cost of providing retirement greatly exceeds its perceived value by service members. For example, Table 1 illustrates the difference between a 20-year valuation for an officer with a 10-percent discount rate and a 20-year cost for the government at a 3.25-percent discount rate. The difference is more than twice the officer's valuation of retirement and amounts to a perceptual "deadweight loss" to the government (Table 1) (DoD Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness 2008, 18).

Year of Service to Which Benefit is Discounted	Present Value to Member (10% discount rate)		Present Value to Member (15% discount rate)		Present Value of Cost to Government (3.25% discount rate)	
	Enlisted	Officer	Enlisted	Officer	Enlisted	Officer
20	$206,000	$385,200	$140,400	$265,000	$458,000	$817,800
12	96,100	179,700	45,900	86,622	354,600	633,200

Table 1.   Impact of Discount Rates on the Value and Cost of Retirement Benefits.
(Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness,
Department of Defense 2008, 19)

H.   ISSUES

A major issue for the DoD is the continuous growth of Military Personnel appropriations. This issue is created by two converging forces: the escalating Federal mandatory expenditures that increase risk to the total DoD budget (Figure 3) and the disproportionate growth of military personnel costs and healthcare within the DoD Budget Authority (BA).

Federal Outlays by Category as % GDP FY1962-FY2012
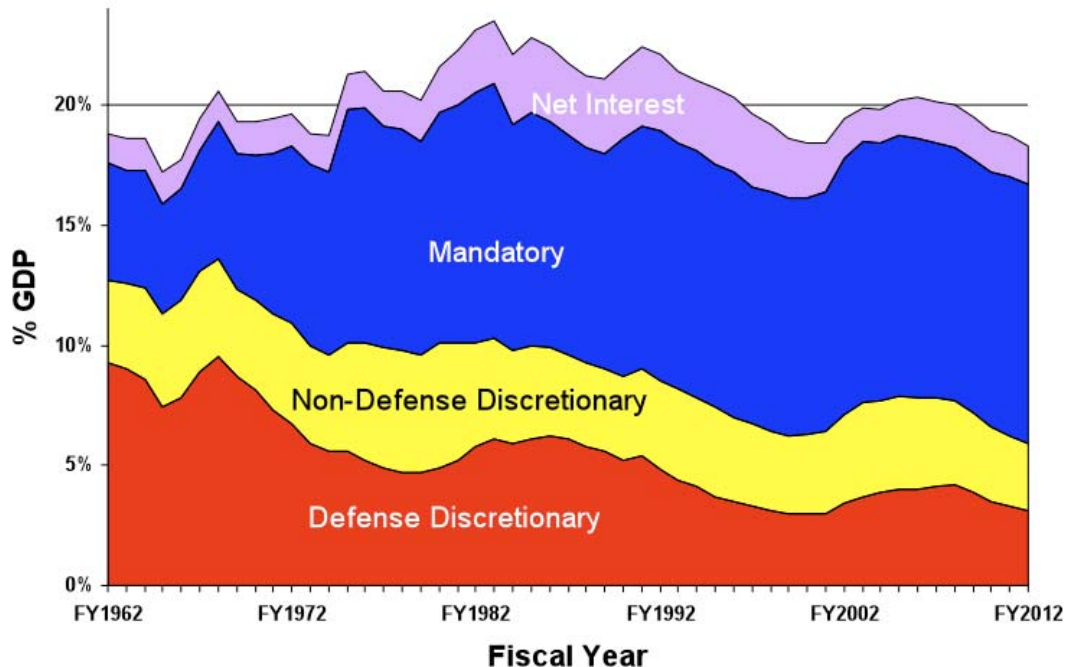
Figure 3.   Federal Outlays by Category as % GDP FY1962 – FY2012. (O'Rourke 2009, 11)

Active-duty military personnel costs per service member grew by 33 percent above inflation between FY 1999 and FY 2005. Congressional initiatives to increase pay and benefits were the primary culprit for these increases. Specific to retirement, "a large fraction of the increased cost is due to increases in retired pay and greatly expanded medical benefits in military retirees" (Henning 2008, 15). As recently as 2009, another CRS report pointed out to Congress that ". . . elements of [military] compensation grew by 45% above inflation. Even if you leave out the cost of Tricare-for-Life and concurrent receipt, military pay and benefits would still have grown by 30% above inflation," as depicted in Figure 4 (Daggett 2009, 6).

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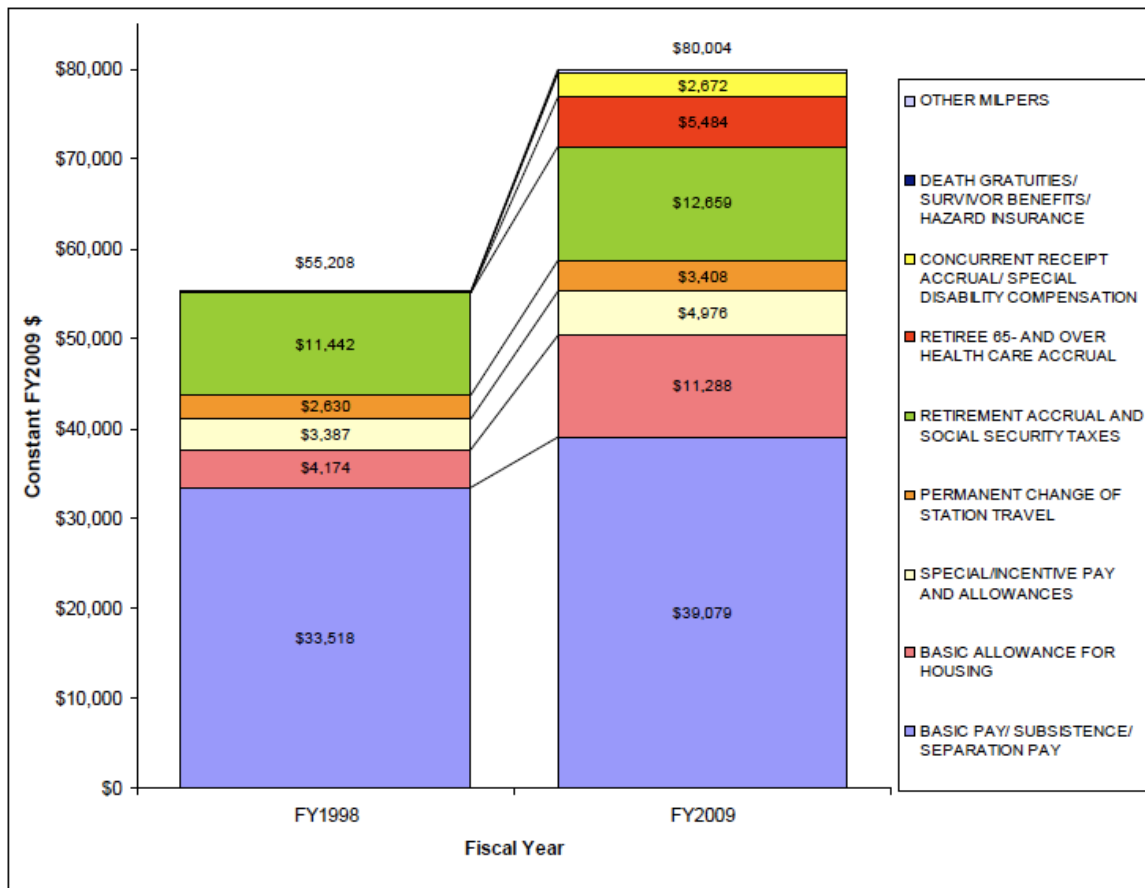
Figure 4.   Changes in Military Pay and Benefits per Active Duty Troop, FY1998 –
FY2009. (Daggett 2009, 6)

In 2006, the DoD spent a total of $28.9 billion on healthcare, of which $13.6 billion was for active-duty personnel and $15.3 billion for retirees. An additional $10.5 billion in VA healthcare was also dedicated to military retirees. This brought the total FY 2006 healthcare costs for military retirees to $25.8 billion.

The generosity in retiree healthcare is evident from the fact that TRICARE premiums have not changed for retirees since 1996. At the same time, costs per retiree to the DoD to provide these retiree healthcare benefits have more than doubled, "growing from $3,727 in 1996 to $8,967 in 2005" (DoD Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness 2008, 46).

These increases create doubts about how long such a system can be sustained. "For example, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that DOD could spend as much as $52 billion annually on healthcare by 2020" (Government Accountability Office 2009, 5). The retiree portion of this ballooning cost is expected to adversely affect active-duty healthcare benefits (Figure 5).
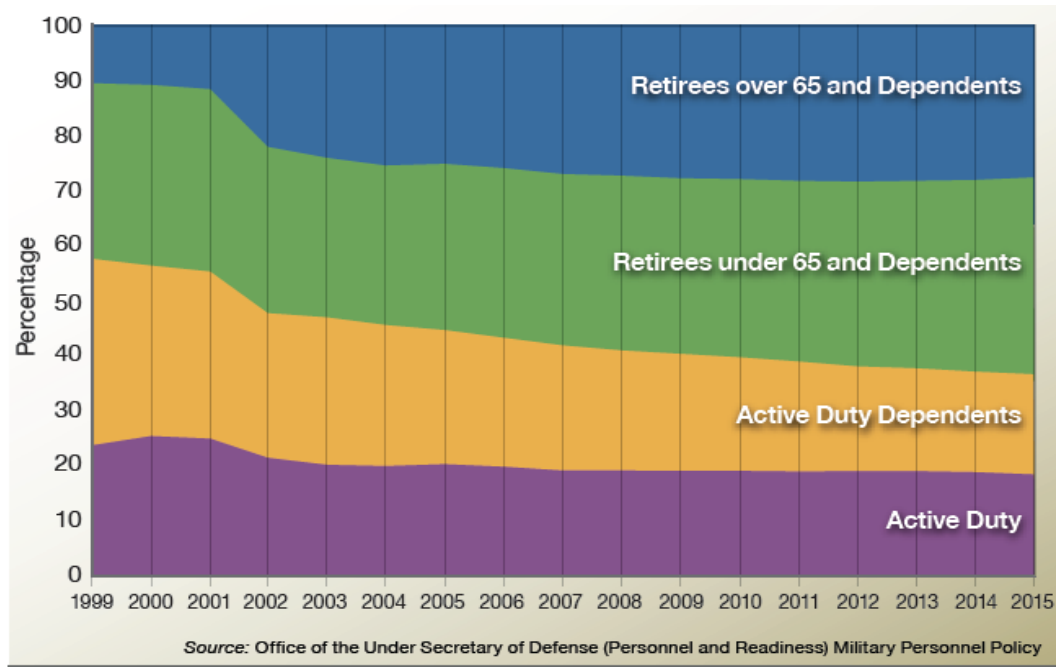
Figure 5.   Military Health Care Costs by Beneficiary Group. (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Department of Defense 2008, 46)

I.   SUMMARY

At 31 percent of the total military compensation budget, deferred expenditures are projected to grow faster than the rest of total compensation.   It also seems counterintuitive that a huge and generous program such as military retirement could be under-appreciated by its target audience.   A 2005 GAO report found that service members "were dissatisfied and even harbored misperceptions of their pay and benefits" (Government Accountability Office 2009, 6).   Participants were ultimately unable to appreciate the competitiveness of their retirement compensation because the system was too confusing and complex.   This provides an opportunity to address some of the issues discussed.

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III.   MILITARY-RETIREMENT-INFORMATION SOURCES

A.   OVERVIEW

> Know where to find the information and how to use it – That's the secret
> of success.
>
> -Albert Einstein

In FY 2006, $53.7 billion were spent on military retirement. The size of this budget dwarfs the GDPs of two thirds of the world's nations, as listed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Ideally, such a huge expenditure would completely result in the behavior-shaping determinants discussed in the previous chapter. In turn, these determinants would act as the catalyst for accomplishing military-manpower end-state goals.

However, in addition to other inefficiencies, the Kafkaesque experience of finding concise military-retirement information creates a disincentive for users. Not unlike the line from "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"—"Water, water, everywhere, Nor any drop to drink"—military personnel are adrift in a sea of military compensation data but without useful retirement-compensation information.

B.   SOURCES

1.   Internet-Based Sources

a.   *Service Portals (DKO, AKO, NKO, AFP, MarineNet, USCG Learning Portal, etc.)*

These are official clearing-houses for service-specific information focused primarily on training. Password-restricted access allows for greater latitude of content, including limited distribution items below the classified level.

b. ***Military Personnel/Manpower Websites (HRC, BUPERS, AFPC, Manpower.usmc.mil, etc.)***

These are official clearing-houses for service-specific personnel regulations and instructions. These websites are Human Resource focused and allow for a higher density of retirement information.

c. ***Other Military Websites/Blogs (StayNavy.mil, etc.)***

These other DoD-sponsored websites provide a wide range of topics to a broader audience not serviced by the websites mentioned above.

d. ***Other Civilian Websites/Blogs (e.g., Military.com, USAAEducationalFoundation.org, etc.)***

These are non-military-sponsored websites that host military information and provide another venue for resources for military-retirement research.

2.   Professional Sources

a. ***Transition Assistance Program (TAP)***

TAP is the primary means by which the DoD prepares service members for transition to a civilian career. It's focused on post-separation/retirement civilian employment and military benefits.

b. ***Pre-Separation Briefs/Seminars***

This covers a variety of military- and civilian-sponsored transition briefs/seminars. Presenters are in a spectrum that ranges from civilian head-hunters to military advocacy groups such as Military Officers Association of America (MOAA).

c. ***U.S. Code Title 10***

This source contains the collection of laws for the Department of Defense. This is the primary document from which all regulation and policies follow.

> ***d.*** ***Military Sponsored Magazines (e.g., Soldiers, All Hands, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guard, etc.)***

This is the "fast food" of military information. It provides an easily consumable mix of service-pertinent information and can be digested quickly.

> ***e.*** ***Publications Dedicated to the Military (e.g., Army Times, Navy Times, Air Force Times, Marine Corps Times, etc.)***

These are commercially authored periodicals dedicated to military news and current events.

3. Word-of-Mouth Sources

These are formal and informal sources that provide military personnel with a shared knowledge base that may not be available elsewhere. The underlying assumption of this report is that these sources are less accurate than Internet and Professional based sources. Within the set of Word-of-Mouth Sources, formal ones would tend to be more accurate than informal ones. Figure 6 shows the relationship between word-of-mouth sources and their respective formality.

- Superior Officer(s)

- Senior Enlisted

- Human Resource / Manpower Officer(s)

- Peers

- Military Retirees

- Others

WORD-OF-MOUTH

INFORMAL SOURCES

FORMAL SOURCES

Senior Enlisted / Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO)

Military Retirees

Others

Peers

Superior Officer(s)

Human Resources / Manpower Officers

Formality by "role and position"
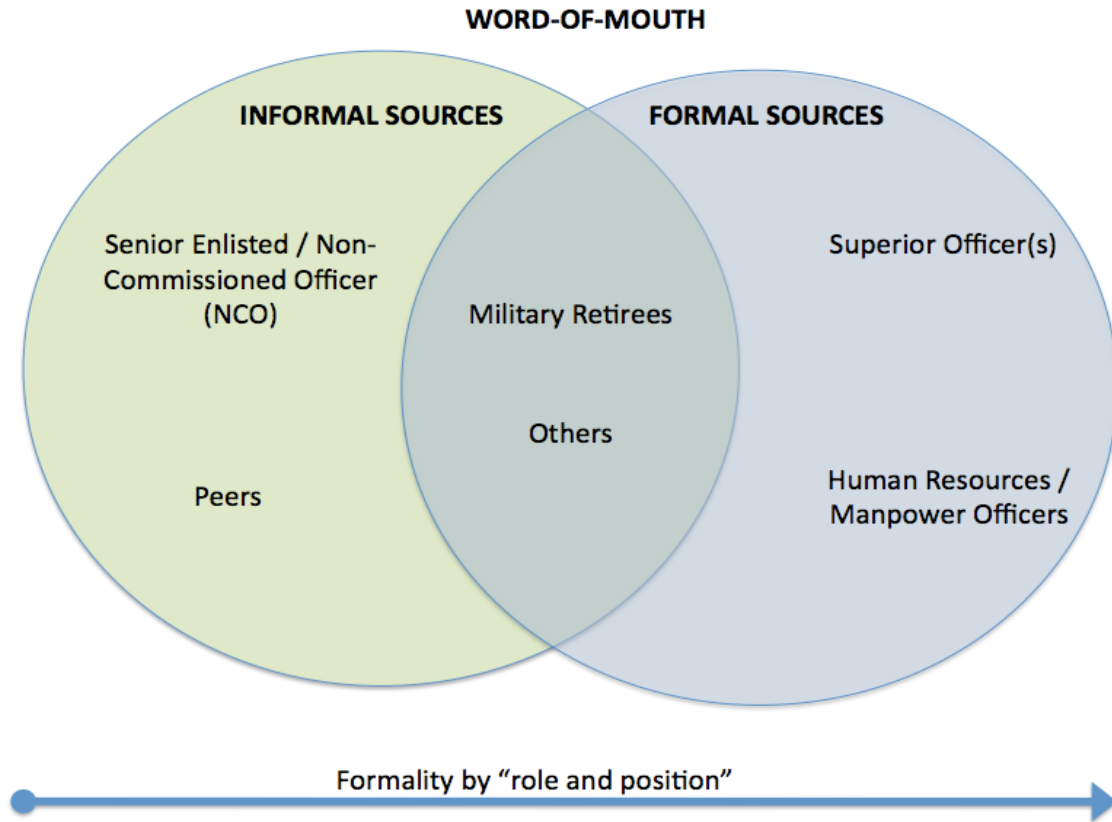
Figure 6.   Word-of-Mouth formality by role and position.

C.   SUMMARY

It is not for a lack of size or scope that military-retirement-information sources are ineffectual. The Internet is brimming with information on military compensation in general and military retirement in particular. Certainly, the military is replete with professional sources of information, as well. Word-of-mouth is probably the primary method through which military members first find out about compensation and military retirement. In total, these three major sources provide more-than-adequate amounts of information on military retirement.

The problem is that there is no comprehensive, one-stop knowledge source that identifies and pulls together all the complexities of military retirement in a user-friendly form. A CNA report substantiates this opinion with its recommendation that the DoD "publicize benefits and improve information access" (Hattiangadi 2001, 2). Specifically, the study recommended the consolidation of information on benefits in either a short

pamphlet or an easily-accessible website. The study goes on to say that the current information about benefits for military personnel and their families is scattered among an array of websites and publications. This lack of consolidation was determined to be ineffective in educating members about their pay and benefits. The study also states that consolidating the information would serve as a recruiting tool by highlighting the differences between the military's generous benefits and its private-sector counterparts. It would also facilitate a single-source educational tool or provide the contact information for the relevant agency in charge of those benefits (Hattiangadi 2001, 127).

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IV. SURVEY QUESTIONS, RESULTS, AND SOURCES

Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted."

- Albert Einstein

A. OVERVIEW

The survey was administered via Zoomerang.com to the NPS student population during 14–24 April 2009. The beginning of Spring 2009 academic quarter was chosen because of low student workloads. When the survey was initiated, there were 1,392 resident students, 1,078 of whom were U.S. military officers qualified to take the survey. Solicitation for survey respondents was posted on the NPS student check-in website, a daily requirement for all U.S. military students. This survey comprised 28 or 29 questions, contingent upon how they answered question number 6. The survey yielded 284 respondents, one of whom ultimately declined to participate. The 283 participants represented 26.3 percent of the U.S. military student population solicited.

B. INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Question 1

*** U.S. Military Officers Only ***

1. Introduction: You are invited to participate in a study entitled "Knowledge of the Military Retirement System among Naval Postgraduate School Officers".

2. Procedures: The survey consists of approximately 29 questions and should take about 10 minutes to complete. All survey questions must be answered completely to be submitted correctly.

3. Risks: The potential risks of participating in this study are: I understand that this research involves no risk or discomfort greater than those encountered in the use of a computer. I understand that my participation in this survey will

provide data for the researcher to analyze the level of military retirement knowledge by Naval Postgraduate School Officers.

4. Benefits: Anticipated benefits from this study are the potential benefits to the Department of Defense, U.S. Navy, science, and possibly the participants.

5. Compensation: I understand that no tangible reward will be given. A copy of the survey results will be available at the conclusion of the study.

6. Confidentiality & Privacy Act: Any information that is obtained during this study will be kept confidential to the full extent permitted by law. All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep your personal information in your research record confidential but total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. I understand that records of my participation will be retained permanently at the Naval Postgraduate School.

7. Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and if agreement to participation is given, it can be withdrawn at anytime without prejudice.

8. Points of Contact: I understand that if I have any questions or comments regarding this project upon the completion of my participation, I should contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Mark Eitelberg, 831-656-3160, meitelberg@nps.edu or Assistant Principal Investigator, LT Asa Kim, USN, adkim@nps.edu. Any other questions or concerns may be addressed to the Naval Postgraduate School IRB Chair: LCDR Paul O'Connor, 831-656-3864, peoconno@nps.edu.

9. Statement of Consent: The purpose, procedures, and duration of participation in this research project have been fully explained. By clicking the YES button below I acknowledge that I have read and understand this information and agree to voluntarily participate in this survey. I also understand that I may stop at any time by exiting this website.

Results and Analysis:

284 officers responded; 283 participated, while one declined.

C. **SECTION I: BASIC BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

1. **Question 2 – Branch of Service**
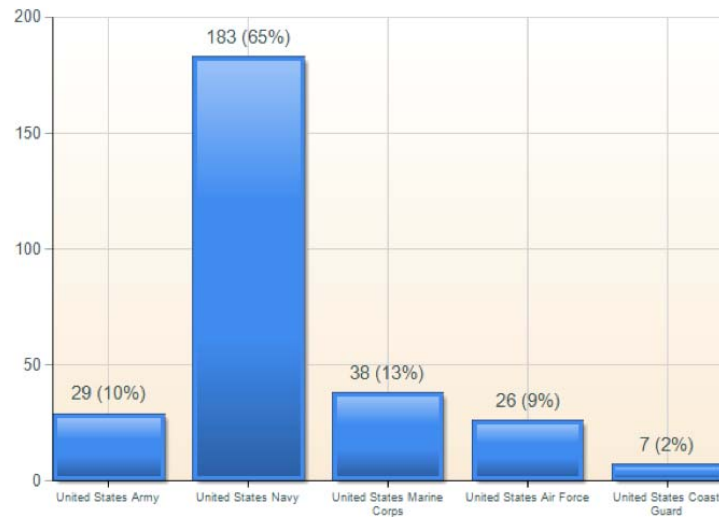
Figure 7.   Branch of Service

2. **Question 3 – Current Years of Service**
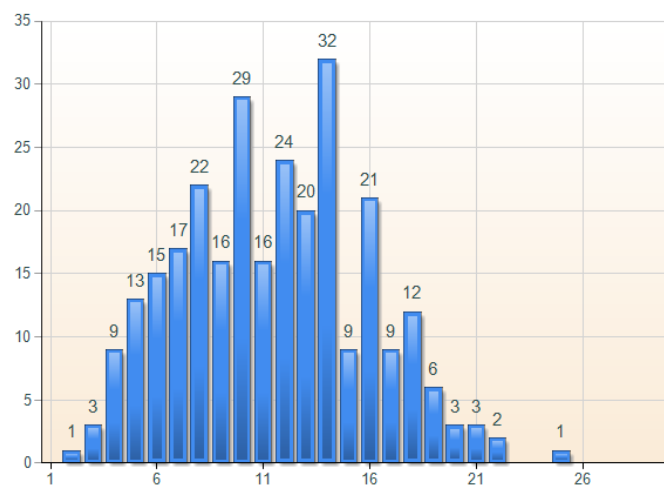
Figure 8.   Current Years of Service

3. Question 4 – Current Pay Grade
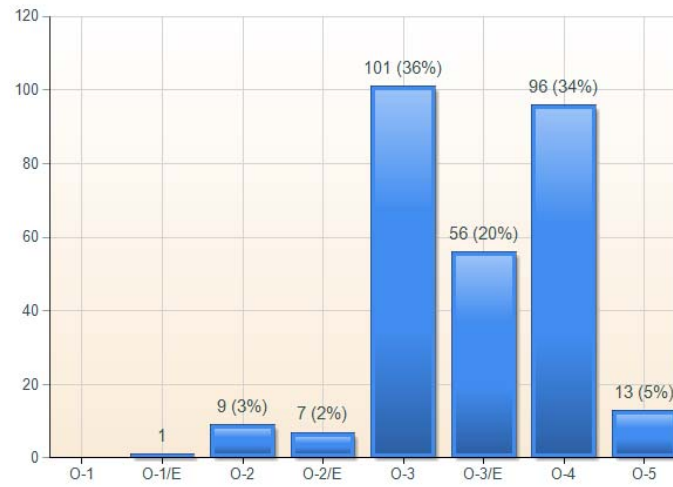
Figure 9.   Current Pay Grade

4. Question 5 – Gender
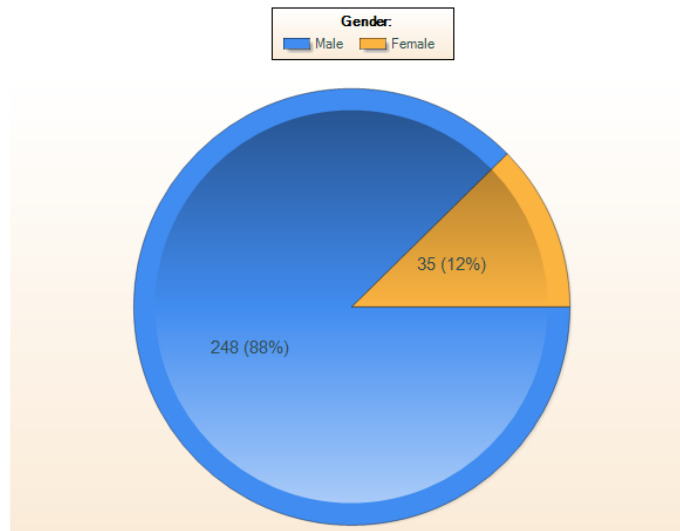
Figure 10.   Gender

5. **Question 6 – Do You Plan to Retire from Military Service after Serving 20 Years or More?**
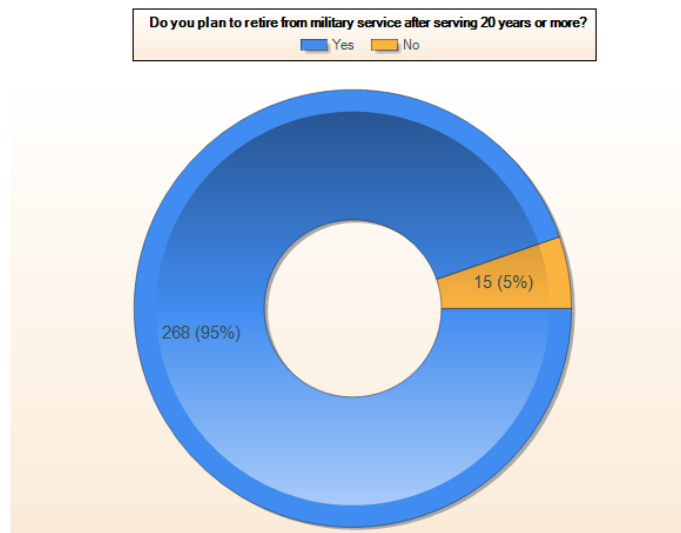
Figure 11.   Do you plan to retire from military service after serving 20 years or more?

6. **Question 7 – How Many Years of Service in Total Do You Anticipate Serving on Active Duty before Leaving/Retiring from the Service?**
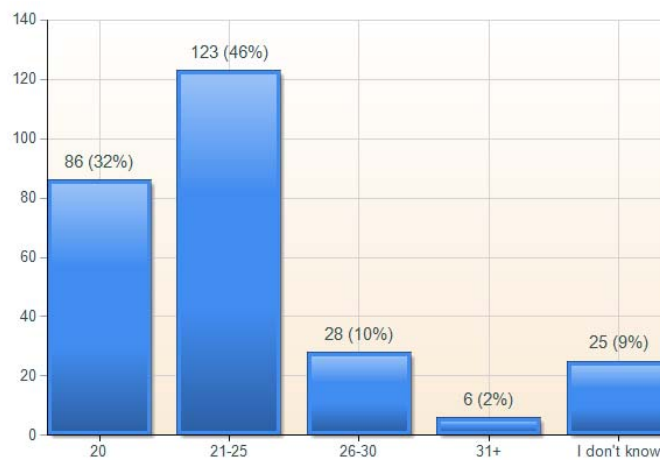
Figure 12.   How many years of service in total do you anticipate serving on active duty before leaving/retiring from the service?

7. **Question 8 – Rank Your Reasons for Deciding to Serve until Military Retirement.**

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Least Important	2	3	4	Neutral	6	7	8	Most Important
Bonus/Contract Retention	97 / 36%	24 / 9%	12 / 4%	4 / 1%	43 / 16%	34 / 13%	30 / 11%	15 / 6%	9 / 3%
Patriotism	9 / 3%	2 / 1%	8 / 3%	17 / 6%	36 / 13%	52 / 19%	67 / 25%	44 / 16%	33 / 12%
Years of service already contributed	14 / 5%	9 / 3%	8 / 3%	5 / 2%	20 / 7%	37 / 14%	66 / 25%	61 / 23%	48 / 18%
Retirement Cash Pay	2 / 1%	1 / 0%	3 / 1%	2 / 1%	13 / 5%	12 / 4%	41 / 15%	65 / 24%	129 / 48%
Retirement Non-Cash Benefits (i.e. Health care, life insurance, exchange/commissary privileges, MWR)	2 / 1%	2 / 1%	8 / 3%	2 / 1%	20 / 7%	24 / 9%	53 / 20%	74 / 28%	83 / 31%

Table 2.   Rank your reasons for deciding to serve until military retirement: (1 is least important, 9 is most important)

8. **Question 9 – Rank Your Reasons for Leaving Military Service Prior to Attaining 20 Years of Service.**

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Least Important	2	3	4	Neutral	6	7	8	Most Important
Bonus/Contract Retention	2 / 13%	2 / 13%	0 / 0%	2 / 13%	6 / 40%	0 / 0%	1 / 7%	1 / 7%	1 / 7%
Patriotism	5 / 33%	1 / 7%	3 / 20%	1 / 7%	3 / 20%	1 / 7%	1 / 7%	0 / 0%	0 / 0%
Years of service already contributed	1 / 7%	2 / 13%	0 / 0%	0 / 0%	7 / 47%	1 / 7%	3 / 20%	1 / 7%	0 / 0%
Retirement Cash Pay	1 / 7%	1 / 7%	1 / 7%	0 / 0%	5 / 33%	1 / 7%	2 / 13%	2 / 13%	2 / 13%
Retirement Non-Cash Benefits (i.e. Health care, life insurance, exchange/commissary privileges, MWR)	2 / 13%	1 / 7%	0 / 0%	1 / 7%	5 / 33%	3 / 20%	1 / 7%	1 / 7%	1 / 7%

Table 3.   Rank your reasons for leaving military service prior to attaining 20 years of service: (1 is least important, 9 is most important)

9. **Question 10 – How Many Years of Service Had You Served When You Decided to Remain until Military Retirement?**
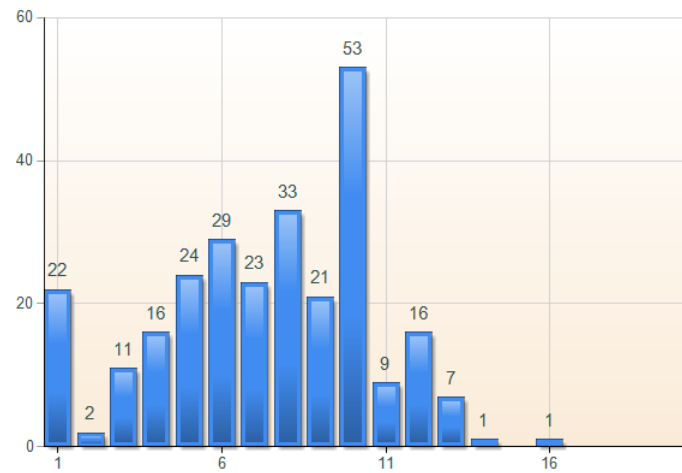
Figure 13.   How many years of service had you served when you decided to remain until military retirement?

10. **Question 11 – How Many Years of Service Had You Served When You Decided Not to Remain until Military Retirement?**
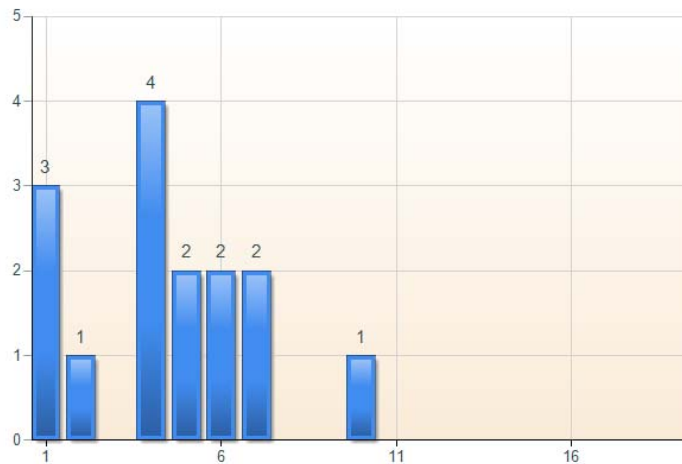
Figure 14.   How many years of service had you served when you decided not to remain until military retirement?

SECTION II: MILITARY RETIREMENT KNOWLEDGE

1. **Question 12 – What Military Retirement Options are Available to You?**
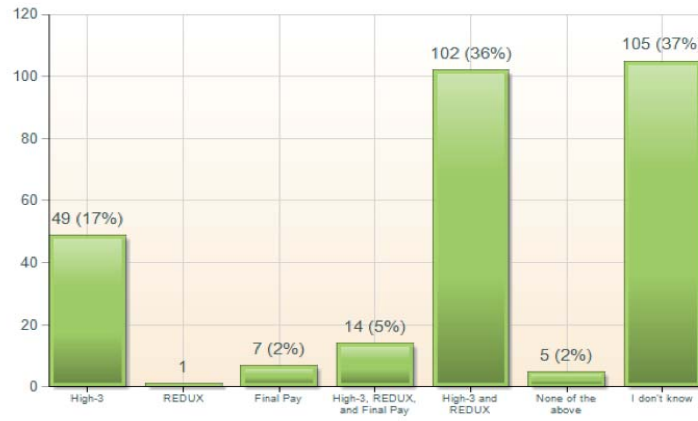
Figure 15.   What military retirement options are available to you?

Answer: High-3 and REDUX

Source: U.S. Code Title 10, Subtitle A, Part II, Chapter 71. High-3 and REDUX were the only two available retirement options for students at the Naval Postgraduate School. Since no respondent could have entered service before 8 September 1980, Final Pay would not be a possibility.

2. **Question 13 – What Percentage of Your Basic Pay Can You Expect to Receive after Retiring with 20 or 30 Years of Service under "High-3"?**
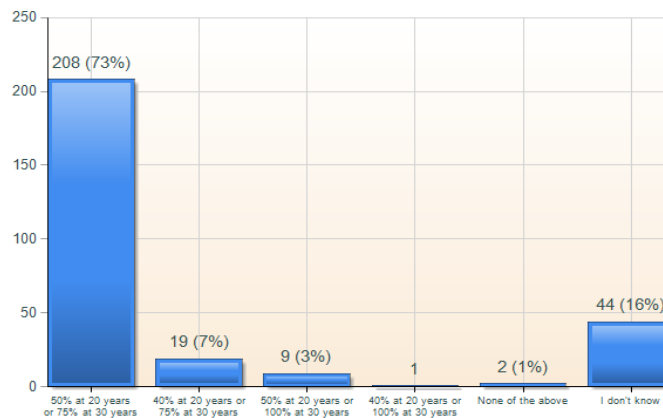
Figure 16.   What percentage of your Basic Pay can you expect to receive after retiring with 20 or 30 years of service under "High-3"?

Answer: 50% at 20 years or 75% at 30 years

Source: U.S. Code Title 10, Subtitle A, Part II, Chapter 71, § 1409.

3.   **Question 14 – What Percentage of Your Basic Pay Can You Expect to Receive after Retiring with 20 or 30 Years of Service under "CSB/REDUX"?**
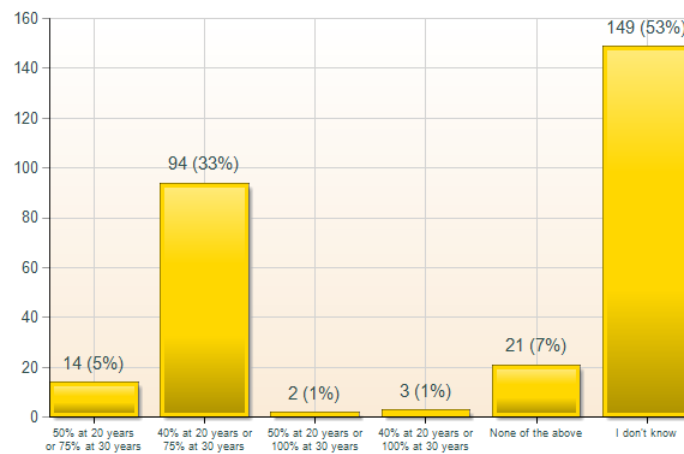
Figure 17.   What percentage of your Basic Pay can you expect to receive after retiring with 20 or 30 years of service under "REDUX/CSB"?
* CSB = Career Status Bonus/REDUX Retirement System

Answer: 40% at 20 years or 75% at 30 years

Source: U.S. Code Title 10, Subtitle A, Part II, Chapter 71, § 1409.

4. Question 15 – Is the Cash Portion of Military Retirement Pay Adjusted Annually for Inflation?
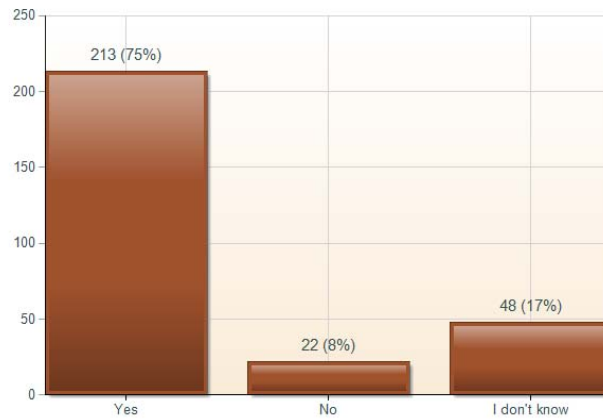
Figure 18.   Is the cash portion of military retirement pay adjusted annually for inflation?

Answer: Yes

Source: U.S. Code Title 10, Subtitle A, Part II, Chapter 71, § 1401a.

5. Question 16 – How is the Survivor Benefit Plan Chosen?
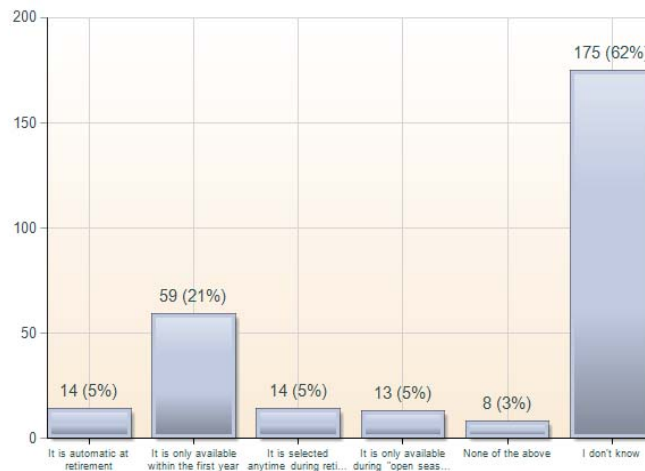
Figure 19.   How is the Survivor Benefit Plan chosen?

Answer: It is automatic at retirement.

Source: U.S. Code Title 10, Subtitle A, Part II, Chapter 73, SUBCHAPTER III, § 1458.

6.   Question 17 – Do Military Retirees have Access to All MWR Services?
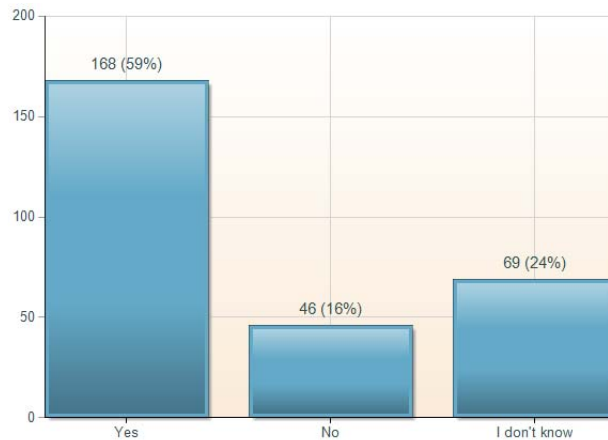
Figure 20.   Do military retirees have access to all MWR services?

Answer: Yes

Source: U.S. Code Title 10, Subtitle A, Part II, Chapter 71, § 1063. All retirees are considered part of the Reserves while they receive their "retainer pay."

7.   Question 18 – Are Retirees Automatically Enrolled into TRICARE Prime upon Retirement?
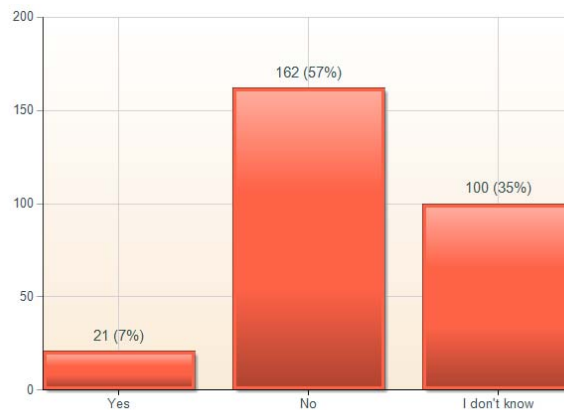
Figure 21.   Are retirees automatically enrolled into TRICARE Prime upon retirement?

Answer: No

Source: TRICARE: Coverage for Retired Service Members, JUN 2004, www.tricare.osd.mil. Retirees are automatically enrolled into TRICARE Standard or Extra.

8.   Question 19 – Is There a Life Insurance Program Similar to SGLI for Military Retirees?
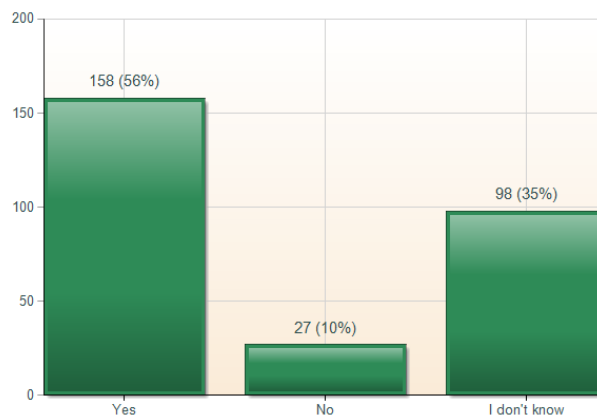
Figure 22.   Is there a life insurance program similar to SGLI for military retirees?
*SGLI = Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance

Answer: Yes

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. http://www.insurance.va.gov/

9.   Question 20 – Does Service Academy or ROTC Time Count Towards Retirement?
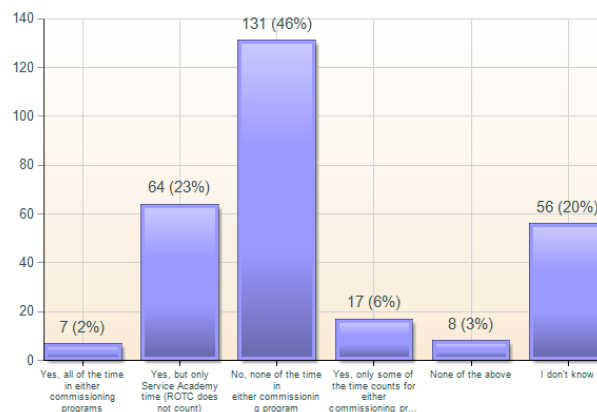
Figure 23.   Does Service Academy or ROTC time count towards retirement?
*ROTC = Reserve Officer Training Corps

Answer: No, none of the time in either commissioning program

Source: U.S. Code Title 10, Subtitle A, Part II, Chapter 49, § 971.

10. Question 21 – Do Retirees Receive the Same TRICARE Benefits at No Additional Cost that they Received While on Active Duty?
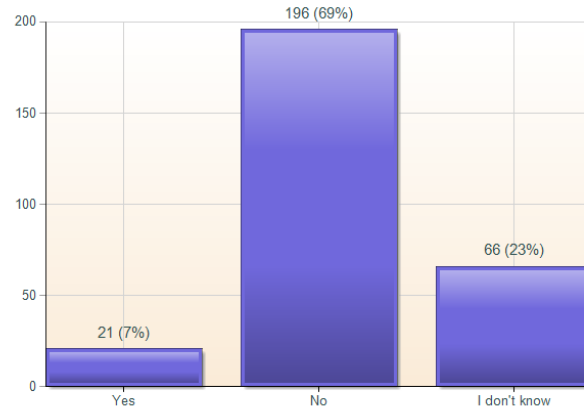
Figure 24.   Do retirees receive the same TRICARE benefits at no additional cost that they received while on active duty?

Answer: No

Source: TRICARE: Coverage for Retired Service Members, JUN 2004. www.tricare.osd.mil. Military retirees can choose to pay an annual premium to increase their coverage to the active duty TRICARE Prime coverage.

11. Question 22 – At How Many Years of Service Does a Service Member Receive 100% of His or Her Basic Pay During Military Retirement?
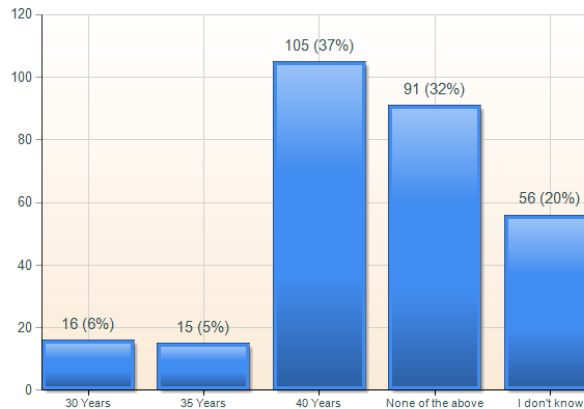
Figure 25.   At how many years of service does a service member receive 100% of his or her Basic Pay during military retirement?

Answer: 40 years

Source: U.S. Code Title 10, Subtitle A, Part II, Chapter 71, § 1409. Retirement after December 31, 2006 authorizes members to accrue 2.5% towards their retirement for every year in excess of 30 years of creditable service.

12.   **Question 23 – How Many Days of Leave Can an Officer Sell Back upon Retirement?**
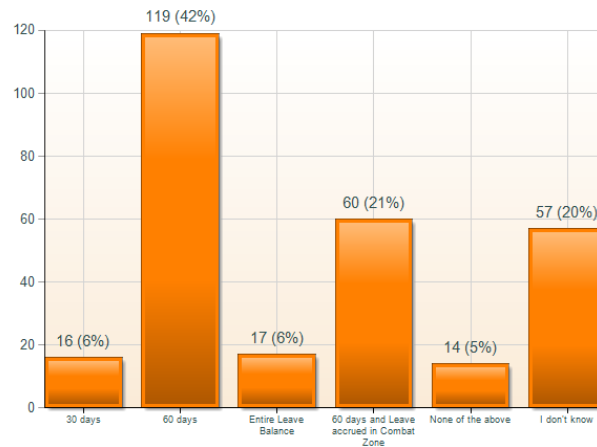
Figure 26.   How many days of leave can an officer sell back upon retirement?

Answer: 60 days

Source: DoD 7000.14-R, DOD Financial Management Regulations, Volume 7A, Military Pay Policy and Procedures Active Duty and Reserve Pay. Chapter 35, Section 3501, Subsection 350101, states that there is a "Career Leave Payment Limitation" of 60 days.

13.   Question 24 – Post 9/11 GI Bill Benefits are Available to Retirees and Their Dependents for How Many Years after the Date of Their Retirement?
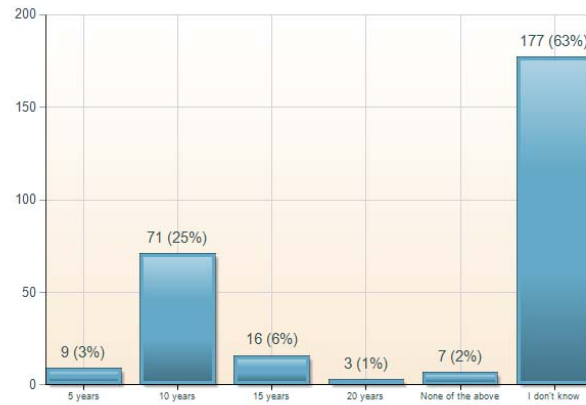
Figure 27.   Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits are available to retirees and their dependents for how many years after the date of their retirement?

Answer: 15 years

Source: Veterans Affairs Pamphlet 22-09-1, October 2008, "The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008."

14.   Question 25 – Is the Military Retirement Pay Subject to Federal Income Taxation?
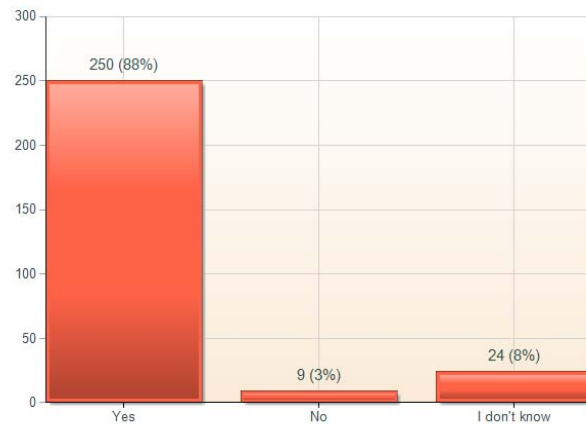
Figure 28.   Is the military retirement pay subject to federal income taxation?

Answer: Yes

E. SECTION III: MILITARY RETIREMENT INFORMATION SOURCES

1. Question 26 – Rank The Following Internet-Based Sources by How Important they Have Been in Increasing Your Awareness about Military Retirement Pay and Benefits.

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Least important	2	3	4	Neutral	6	7	8	Most important
Service Portals (i.e. DKO, AKO, NKO, AFP, MarineNet, USCG Learning Portal, etc.)	89 31%	38 13%	23 8%	16 6%	42 15%	25 9%	30 11%	11 4%	9 3%
Military Personnel/Manpower websites (i.e. HRC, BUPERS, AFPC, Manpower.USMC.mil, etc.)	60 21%	29 10%	20 7%	21 7%	38 13%	32 11%	28 10%	31 11%	24 8%
Other military website/blogs (i.e. StayNavy.mil, etc.)	92 33%	26 9%	20 7%	21 7%	64 23%	20 7%	22 8%	11 4%	7 2%
Other civilian website/blogs (i.e. Military.com, USAAEducationalFoundation.org, etc.)	63 22%	26 9%	17 6%	17 6%	57 20%	46 16%	34 12%	14 5%	9 3%

Table 4.   Rank the following Internet-based sources by how important they have been in increasing your awareness about military retirement pay and benefits: (1 is least important, 9 is most important)

2. Question 27 – Rank the Following Professional Sources by How Important they Have Been in Increasing Your Awareness about Military Retirement Pay and Benefits.

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Least important	2	3	4	Neutral	6	7	8	Most important
Transition Assistance Program (TAP)	84 30%	20 7%	12 4%	8 3%	83 29%	16 6%	21 7%	17 6%	22 8%
Pre-Separation Briefs / Seminars	75 27%	18 6%	13 5%	9 3%	81 29%	20 7%	37 13%	17 6%	13 5%
US Code Title 10	139 49%	28 10%	22 8%	10 4%	65 23%	8 3%	5 2%	4 1%	2 1%
Military Sponsored Magazines (i.e Soldiers, All Hands, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guard, etc)	76 27%	21 7%	29 10%	18 6%	59 21%	35 12%	24 8%	17 6%	4 1%
Publications dedicated to the military (i.e. Army Times, Navy Times, Air Force Times, Marine Corps Times, etc.)	37 13%	27 10%	20 7%	9 3%	39 14%	50 18%	49 17%	28 10%	24 8%

Table 5.   Rank the following Professional sources by how important they have been in increasing your awareness about military retirement pay and benefits: (1 is least important, 9 is most important)

3.   **Question 28 – Rank the Following Word of Mouth Sources by How Important they Have Been in Increasing Your Awareness about Military Retirement Pay and Benefits.**

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Least important	2	3	4	Neutral	6	7	8	Most important
Superior Officer(s)	26 9%	15 5%	10 4%	13 5%	37 13%	46 16%	69 24%	45 16%	22 8%
Senior Enlisted	54 19%	13 5%	12 4%	14 5%	58 20%	57 20%	40 14%	23 8%	12 4%
Human Resouce / Manpower Officer(s)	86 30%	22 8%	18 6%	18 6%	63 22%	26 9%	26 9%	14 5%	10 4%
Peers	14 5%	14 5%	12 4%	12 4%	45 16%	57 20%	62 22%	44 16%	23 8%
Military Retirees	44 16%	13 5%	11 4%	13 5%	57 20%	34 12%	49 17%	32 11%	30 11%
Others	81 29%	9 3%	14 5%	16 6%	93 33%	32 11%	24 8%	11 4%	3 1%

Table 6.   Rank the following Word of Mouth sources by how important they have been in increasing your awareness about military retirement pay and benefits: (1 is least important, 9 is most important)

## F.	SECTION IV: RECOMMENDATIONS AND INPUTS

### 1.	Question 29 – Please Tell Us about Any Other Sources for Military Retirement Information Not Mentioned in this Survey.

Results:

Fifty-seven respondents answered this question. 20 of the responses were not of value to this survey. The remaining responses provided information that was missed when constructing the survey. Some of the notable recommendations by respondents were the following:

- Thrift Savings Plans (TSP) contributions
- Congressional Quarterly reports
- Military Personnel Manual (MILPERSMAN, etc.)
- Commercial news outlets (e.g., Marketplace, etc.)
- American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)
- Command Career Counselor (CCC) briefings
- Pre-commissioning briefs
- Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)
- Training briefs from professional community organizations within the services (e.g., Navy Supply Corps)
- Armed Forces Radio and Television Service (AFRTS)
- Service message traffic (e.g., ALNAV, NAVADMIN, MARADMIN, etc.)
- Private military-focused organizations (e.g., Military Officers of Association of America (MOAA), etc.)
- United Services Automobile Association (USAA) Financial Planners and Military Retirement Planning
- Navy Mutual Aid Association (NMAA) and Army Air Force Mutual Aid Association (AAFMA)
- Private military-focused financial organizations (e.g., First Command Financial Services (FCFS))
- Service-specific almanacs (e.g., National Guard Almanac, etc.)
- Military-sponsored schools (e.g., Staff Academy, Naval Postgraduate School, etc).

2.   **Question 30 – Please Let us Know How You would Want the Department of Defense to Communicate or Make Available Military Retirement Information to Service Members.**

Results:

One hundred seventy-six participants answered this question. Four of the responses were of no value to the survey. Of the 172 useful recommendations, the respondents preferred one or more of these five general communication methods:

- Consolidated/Centralized Knowledge-based Websites: 77 responses (44%)
- Annual/General Military Training: 32 responses (18%)
- E-mail/Mail/Pamphlets: 26 responses (15%)
- Human Resources Personnel/Websites: 14 responses (8%)
- Complaints/Misunderstanding of Question: 23 responses (13%)

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V.   DATA ANALYSIS

The ultimate authority must always rest with the individual's own reason
and critical analysis.

- Dalai Lama

A.   OVERVIEW

The survey knowledge questions were designed to cover a range of difficulty that facilitated an average response accuracy of about 50 percent. Question 13—"What percentage of your Basic Pay can you expect to receive after retiring with 20 or 30 years of service under 'High-3'?"—represented the "easiest" knowledge question in the survey. At the other end of the spectrum, Question 16—"How is the Survivor Benefit Plan chosen?"—characterized the more-nuanced facts of their military retirement knowledge.

A knowledge accuracy of 40 to 60 percent was chosen as the range that would confirm a deficiency in military retirement compensation knowledge among military student officers at NPS. The survey yielded a total average score of 48.9 percent in the Military Retirement Knowledge portion of the survey. This average score validates this report's hypothesis and bodes poorly for the military officer population across DoD.

Data mining for correlations between the dependent variable (Basic Biographical Information) and independent variable (Average Accuracy) used linear, logarithmic and polynomial regressions. The following standards were set as acceptable "goodness of fit" thresholds for determining whether correlations existed:

- Significance F (F-test) from ANOVA table of 10 percent or less and

- Adjusted R^2 of 90 percent or more

B.   BASIC BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION DATA ANALYSIS

1.   Branch of Service Average Score

- Army 45.6%

- Navy 48.8%

- Air Force 48.1%

- Marine Corps 53.6%

- Coast Guard 41.8%

2. Years of Service Average Score

The regressions showed no significant correlation between a participant's years of service and his or her accuracy in the Military Retirement Knowledge quiz. The best "goodness of fit" came from the polynomial regression with an F-test of 0 and an Adjusted R^2 of .1055.

However, consistent with conventional views of the career tipping point at the 10-year mark, average accuracy scores for respondents with one to nine years of service were 6.3 percentage points lower than the overall total average accuracy score. Respondents with 10 or more years of service scored, on average, 3.0 percent points higher than the overall average. This 9.3 percent accuracy spread still seems low for the senior group of people rapidly approaching retirement.

3. Pay Grade Average Score

DoD official Pay Grades reflecting four or more years of prior enlisted experience contain an "E" suffix following the Pay Grade, but only for the first three officer ranks. In this survey, respondents were polled only for their Pay Grade and not specifically asked about prior enlisted experience. As a result, there were O-4 and O-5 respondents who may or may not have had prior enlisted service.

Question 4 presented a correlation between Pay Grades and the average accuracy of the respondents. Figure 29 illustrates a strong correlation between seniority and accuracy among officers with non-prior enlisted Pay Grades. Officers with prior enlisted Pay Grades from O-2E and O-3E scored well above their non-prior enlisted peers. There appears to be a strong relationship between their additional years of service and their military retirement knowledge.
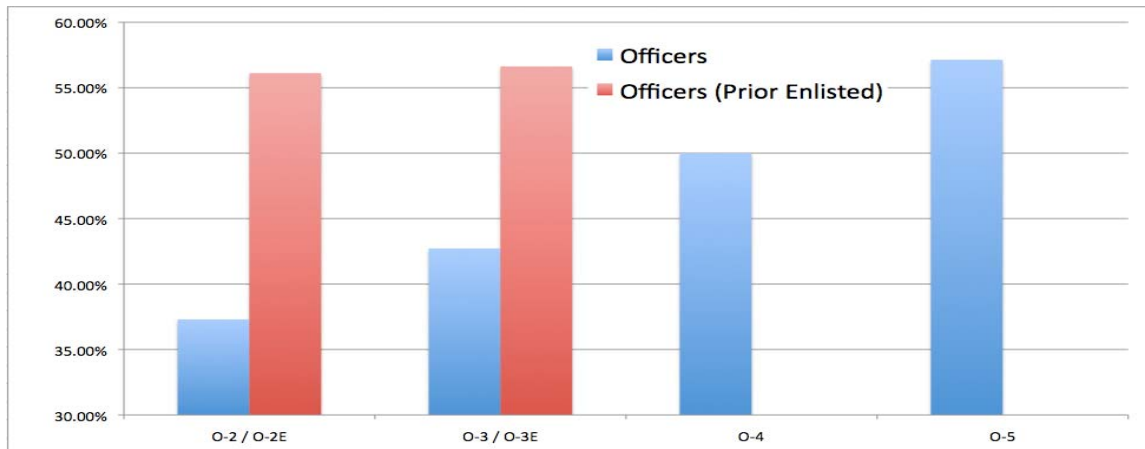
Figure 29.   Pay Grade Average Accuracy

Note: There was a single O-1E respondent that was not included in Figure 29 because the data was deemed an outlier.

4.   Gender Average Score

As referenced earlier in the Valuation Discount Rate section of this report, women were expected to have a lower discount rate than men. As a result, the expectation was that women would score higher in the accuracy of their military retirement knowledge. However, the results were surprising: The average accuracy score for males was 50.3 percent, while females scored much lower, at 38.6 percent.

5.   Plan to Retire Average Score

Question 6 was a conditional branching question. Respondents who answered "yes" to this question were directed to question seven. Those who answered "no" were directed to question nine.

Respondents who did plan to retire had an average accuracy rate of 49.7 percent and 11.7 average years of service. Those who did not plan to retire had an average accuracy rate of 33.3 percent and averaged six years of service. As depicted in Figure 30, the only common factor for this group is low years of service. All respondents who did not want to retire were at or below the 10-year career tipping point.
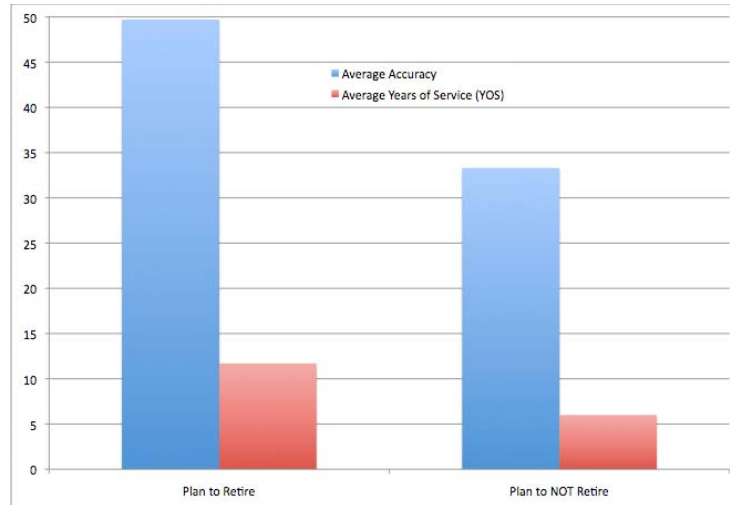
Figure 30.   Average Accuracy Rate and Years of Service for Decisions to Retire

6.   Years of Service at Retirement Average Score

There were 268 respondents who expected to retire from the military. Regression analyses showed no direct correlation between expected years of service at retirement and accuracy. The best "goodness of fit" came from the polynomial regression with an F-test of .1761 and an Adjusted R^2 of .0056.

However, the average accuracy within response groups showed positive trends with years of service expected at retirement, evident in Figure 31. This could be attributed to a lifelong interest in all things pertaining to a military career, including post-career aspects and retirement pay and benefits in particular. As expected, respondents who answered "I don't know" represented the average accuracy score for all respondents who were planning to retire.
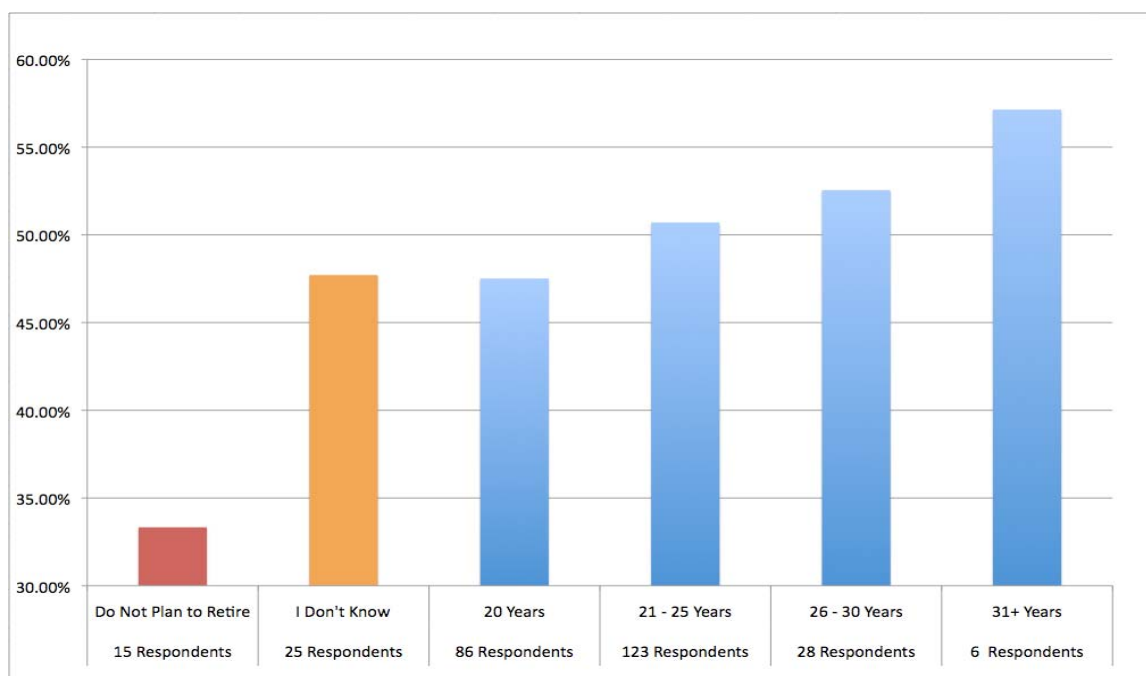
Figure 31.   Expected Years of Service at Retirement

7.   Factors Influencing Retirement Decisions

As illustrated previously in Table 2, "Retirement Cash Pay" and "Retirement Non-Cash Benefits" ranked as the most important factors in respondents' decisions to stay until military retirement. Conversely, Table 3 illustrated that the respondents who did not want to stay until retirement largely pointed to Cash Pay and Non-Cash Benefits as their reasons for wanting to get out before retirement.

Figure 32 represents the average weighted score respondents gave to each reason for staying or not staying until military retirement. Contrary to conventional thinking, Patriotism was not the top motivator for people staying in and was not an important reason for getting out. Instead, Cash Pay and Non-Cash Benefits trumped all other factors for both groups. They were the strongest incentives for those staying until retirement and, paradoxically, also the most important factor stated by officers expecting to get out. These two core components of military retirement compensation offer the best opportunities for the DoD to make already-receptive service members more aware of their retirement package.
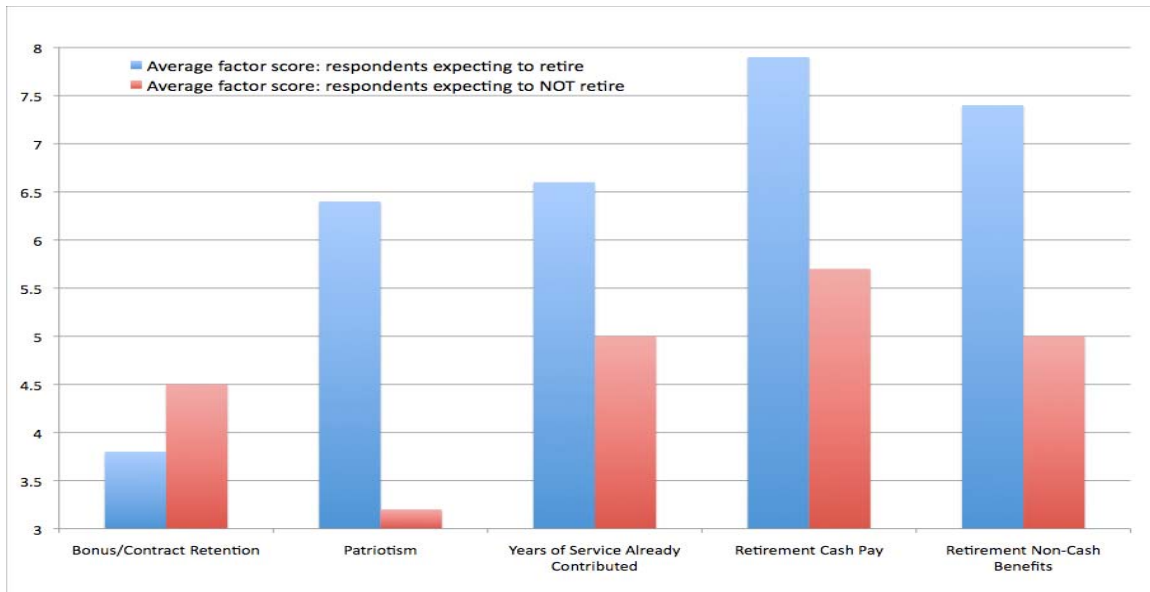
Figure 32.   Average Score of Reasons for Serving until Military Retirement

8.   Years of Service at Retirement/Separation Decision

195 out of 283 respondents made their decision to stay or not stay for military retirement. Their decisions occurred before the tipping point in both groups. Figure 13 shows that respondents expecting to retire typically made their decisions at or before the career tipping point, with a mode of 52 respondents at the ten-year mark. Figure 14 depicts how the decision points were made several years earlier for those who decided not to stay until retirement.

C.   INFORMATION SOURCES DATA ANALYSIS

The survey's total average accuracy score of 48.9 percent indicated a deficiency in the respondents' military retirement compensation knowledge. This survey covered the majority of the information sources, as evidenced by only 17 new and original sources being offered by respondents under Question 29: "Please tell us about any other sources for military retirement information not mentioned in this survey." As a system, the collection of information sources highlighted in this survey reflected disappointing results and was in line with the criticisms that were universal to many of the comments at the end of the survey.

Table 7 shows the three different types of sources and how they were ranked in importance by the five service branches. Word-of-Mouth Sources were ranked the highest in importance by all the service branches. However, a further breakdown revealed that the Marine Corps relied the least on Word-of-Mouth Sources, while the Coast Guard relied the most. This aligns closely with the inverse of their accuracy ratings. The Marine Corps had the highest average accuracy score, 53.6 percent, and the lowest average Word-of-Mouth importance, 4.6. The Coast Guard had the lowest average accuracy score, 41.8 percent, and the highest average Word-of-Mouth importance, 5.3. What can be interpreted from this is that Word-of-Mouth Sources should not be the primary method for disseminating retirement information because of its inherent inaccuracies. It's important to note that only seven Coast Guard student officers took the survey and this may reduce the significance of sample to population inferences.

Perhaps the least surprising result was the very high importance given to Peers and Senior Officers across the board for all services. The often-informal nature of peers creates the expectation that the information would not necessarily be accurate. Senior Officers, on the other hand, have a formal charge to develop their officers and, therefore, must ensure the accuracy and scope of their information. However, this opens the door to a much bigger issue regarding DoD leadership and its role in the dysfunctional nature of current military retirement information systems.

Branch of Service Average Accuracy Score	Branch of Service	Internet-Based Sources				Professional Sources					Word-of-Mouth Sources						Source Avg's		
		Q 26: Service Portals	Q 26: Military Personnel/Manpower Websites	Q 26: Other Military Websites/Blogs Website	Q 26: Other Civilian Website	Q 27: Transition Assistance Program (TAP)	Q 27: Pre-Separation Briefs/Seminars	Q 27: U.S. Code Title 10	Q 27: Mil Sponsored Magazines	Q 27: Military-Dedicated Publications	Q 28: Superior Officers	Q 28: Senior Enlisted	Q 28: HR Officers	Q 28: Peers	Q 28: Military Retirees	Q 28: Others	Average Internet-Based Sources	Average Professional Sources	Average Word-of-Mouth Sources
45.6%	Army	4.3	4.3	3.0	4.2	3.1	3.6	2.4	3.5	5.2	5.9	4.7	3.8	6.4	5.2	3.9	4.0	3.6	5.0
48.8%	Navy	3.6	4.8	4.0	4.5	4.3	4.4	2.8	4.2	5.3	5.8	5.0	3.9	5.9	5.5	4.2	4.2	4.2	5.0
48.1%	Air Force	4.6	4.9	3.5	4.3	3.7	3.7	2.7	3.5	5.2	6.2	4.8	3.9	6.4	5.4	4.3	4.3	3.8	5.2
53.6%	Marine Corps	3.3	4.6	2.9	4.1	4.7	4.8	2.5	3.3	4.5	5.6	4.4	3.9	5.5	4.8	3.5	3.7	3.9	4.6
41.8%	Coast Guard	2.9	2.9	2.7	3.4	5.6	5.4	2.9	4.4	5.0	6.4	5.7	4.4	5.6	5.6	4.0	3.0	4.7	5.3
48.9%	Total Average	3.7	4.3	3.2	4.1	4.3	4.4	2.6	3.8	5.0	6.0	4.9	4.0	6.0	5.3	4.0			
	Source Average	3.8				4.0					5.0								

Table 7.   Information Sources' Average Accuracy by Branch of Service

D.   OPEN COMMENTS DATA ANALYSIS

Chapter IV of the survey included a section for open-ended comments. Question 29, as discussed in the previous chapter, polled the respondents for any information sources that may have been missed. Question 30 polled the respondents for ways in which they would prefer the DoD to present military retirement information to them. 62 percent of the respondents gave personal recommendations to the last question. 172 of these recommendations yielded five basic categories of responses. The largest category was to "Consolidate/Centralize Knowledge-Based Websites" eliciting responses from 44 percent of the 172 recommendations.

The obvious consensus of respondents for a consolidated web-based solution probably reflects the ubiquitous nature of and demand for internet-based information. All the services have leveraged this post-Google norm for training and administration. Nothing about retirement information training should preclude this. Respondents concur:

- "Consolidate information on one DoD website."
- "A one-stop shop site for military benefits and allowances would be appreciated, it seems now that there are several sites that discuss these

subjects. I have not sought out answers since it seems they are all over the place. Also, I am not certain how well the various sources pair up with one another (i.e., is there "bad" information out there on any of these sites)."

- "For my own use, the Internet is the best resource (IF it is a simple enough interface – not too complicated to get the right answer in 5 minutes or less)."

- "Put all the information in one spot, too many things change and we don't know about it."

- "Consolidate all sources into 1 website/source with all documentation. Bypass all the different spins placed on interpretation of documents which only focus on certain parts of the documents. Put it all in one spot, tell the service members where it is at and let us do our own reading."

E.   HYPOTHESIS ASSUMPTION OUTCOMES

The overall mean of 48.9 percent fell well within the assumed 40 and 60 percent accuracy range. This was important because it was the primary parameter in setting up the confidence window that determined whether to accept or reject the hypothesis. Clearly, the ayes have it.

Though not as rigorously fleshed out as the overall hypothesis, most of the supporting assumptions turned out to be true. Figure 30 shows the disparity in accuracy between officers who planned to retire and those who did not. Intentions to retire clearly came with seniority and higher awareness and point to the need to address retirement education early.

Figure 33 also shows the primacy of Cash over Non-Cash in high accuracy scores. The complexity and ambiguity of Non-Cash components proved counterproductive to the desired end state of officers who fully value their pay and benefits. If the benefits of Non-Cash components still outweigh these obstacles, then higher education levels will be the burden.
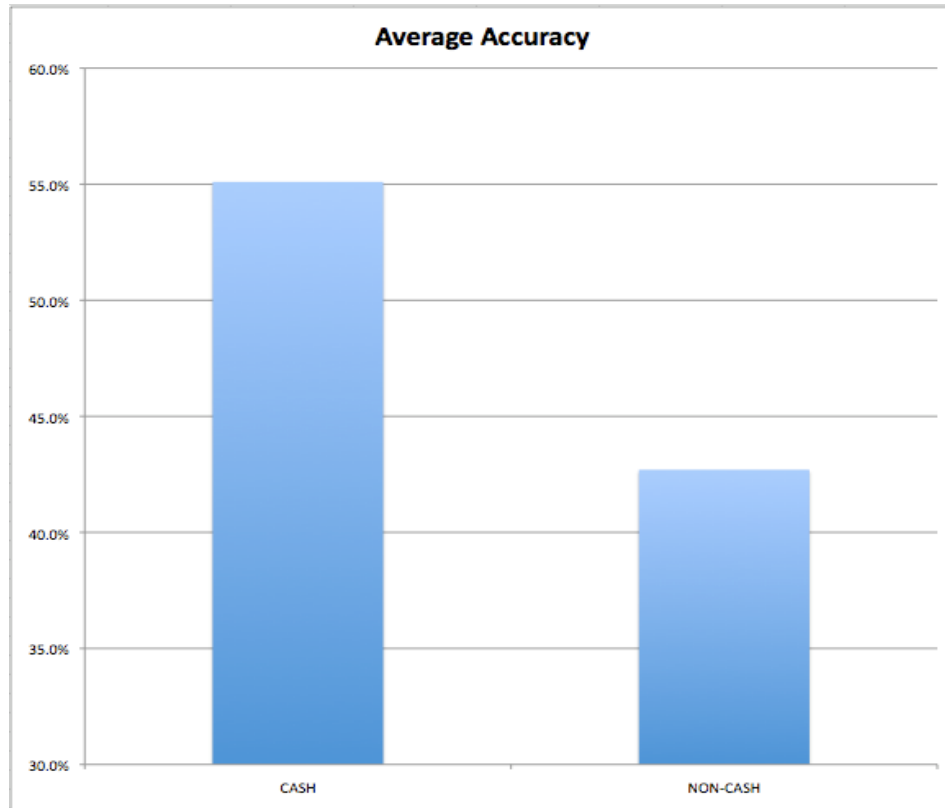
Figure 33.　　　Average Accuracy of Cash vs. Non-Cash

Word-of-Mouth, or in U.S. Navy slang, "Scuttlebutt," has been and will continue to be the main mode of information gathering amongst officers. Though ubiquitous, this source doesn't always lend itself to higher accuracy. The U.S. Marine Corps' and U.S. Coast Guard's respective associations with Word-of-Mouth sources validate this point, as seen in Table 7.

Though initially assumed by the authors to be the most certain of the relationships, the connection between retirement knowledge level and years of service proved the most tenuous. Direct correlations failed at the individual years-of-service level. The closest to a relationship that could be salvaged from the data was a 9.3 percent increase in accuracy after the tipping point 10-year mark. Paradoxically, Pay Grade to accuracy showed a very clear relationship, as shown in Figure 29. Both of these independent variables again point to the fact that military retirement education is best emphasized earlier rather than later.

F.   SUMMARY

The survey scores were poor. They were disappointing because the scores represented a $53.7 billion deferred compensation package for FY 2006, of which only half was understood. They also reflected poorly on the overall officer corps, given the highly-educated sample population. Finally, the scores were poor because they concur with the hypothesis that military retirement information systems are not effectively communicating the value of retirement pay and benefits to their target audience.

Although the regression analyses of average accuracy as a dependent variable and the independent variables highlighted in this chapter did not yield sufficient "goodness of fit," the resulting preponderance of favorable trends supports this report's assumptions.

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VI.   CONCLUSION

A.   OVERVIEW

> Make everything as simple as possible, but not simpler.

> - Albert Einstein

The media routinely report on the size of various components of military budgets. However, the size of military retirement rarely makes headlines, even though its generosity should. This can be attributed to the continuation of the public's high regard for the military relative to all other institutions, as shown in Figure 34. The military's preferential standing is beneficial to its interests and its objectives. Unfortunately, media and government pandering to the military's popularity creates budgetary inefficiencies and perhaps nowhere is this more significant than in the military compensation system.

Note: Data indicate percent who responded that they have "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in each institution.

Source: Gallup, June 2007
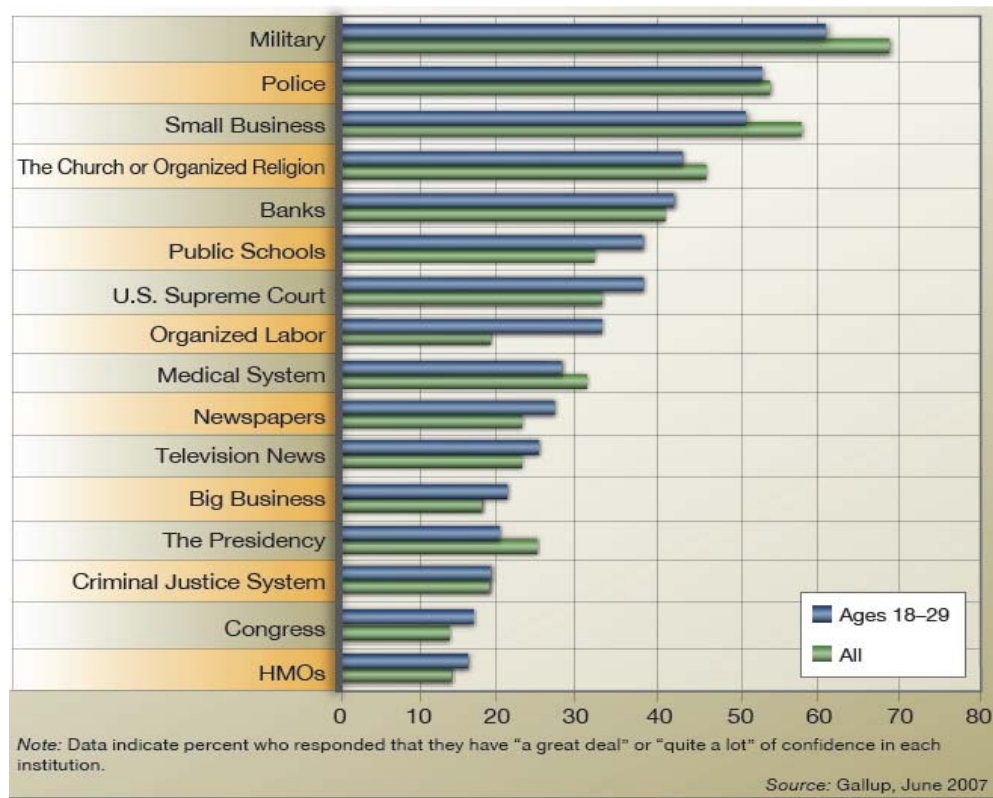
Figure 34.   Confidence in Major Institutions (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Department of Defense 2008, 6)

The myriad of voices from Congress's own research organizations (e.g., CRS, CBO, GAO, etc.), DoD's major compensation-specific reports (e.g., QRMC Volumes 1 & 2, NPRST, etc.), and private think tanks (e.g., RAND, CNA, The Heritage Foundation, etc.) referenced throughout this report offer a wealth of valuable analysis and recommendations on military retirement. Unfortunately, they seem to fall on the federal government's deaf ears. It's hard not to conclude that political viability is, yet again, running interference against prudent decision-making.

The following conclusions and recommendations will not only add to the voices of reform, but will also validate their assumptions with regard to military officers. The preponderance of evidence confirms the report's hypothesis. Military compensation awareness among surveyed officers fell well short of acceptable levels, and this can be attributed to ineffective communication systems. Both the knowledge levels summarized in Chapter V and open comments by respondents confirmed this knowledge deficiency.

The following sample responses speak loudly of the frustration that military officers feel with the current retirement-information systems:

- Navy male Lieutenant Commander with 14 years of service: ". . . Military retirement is a big carrot that is used, but very little is known about it."

- Navy male Lieutenant with seven years of service: ". . . We get training on every aspect of the military but NO FORMAL TRAINING on our retirement benefits until separation classes (TAP, etc.). At this point it is too late to get sailors to 'Stay Navy'."

- Navy female Lieutenant with 14 years of service: "After taking the survey, I realize how much I do not know. . . . "

- Army male Captain with eight years of service: "DOD needs to make it easier for us to get information. There needs to be a simple consolidated website to go to. I didn't know half the answers to the Qs [Questions] you asked on the quiz . . . and I almost have 10 years in the Army!"

- Air Force male Captain with 11 years of service: ". . . This survey made me realize I'm not very knowledgeable on the details surrounding our retirement benefits."

- Air Force male Major with 12 years of service: "Stop making it purposely difficult to determine what the benefits are and consolidate it into one, easy to read, pamphlet. . . . "

- Marine Corps male Lieutenant with 13 years of service: "Simplify current system and info."

These comments offer the report's most telling evidence that, ". . . not systematically informing servicemembers about the value of their total compensation, [allows for] dissatisfaction and misunderstanding to perpetuate even though the department and Congress have made significant efforts in recent years to increase military compensation." (Government Accountability Office 2005, 6).

B.   RECOMMENDATIONS

With 31 percent of total military compensation going towards Deferred Benefits in FY 2006 and no real effective method to communicate this information to service members, military personnel lack the awareness to make a sound decision when estimating their cash and non-cash deferred benefits. The DoD needs to set in motion the recommendations suggested by government and private-sector studies. Implementing these recommendations into valuable benefits (i.e., military-retirement information) for military personnel will result in potential savings for the DoD, increased readiness, and improved efficiencies in the management of manpower steady-state levels.

This project has found that Internet-Based and Professional Sources should have the lead role in educating military personnel because the information can be more tightly controlled and easily broadcasted. Proper leveraging of these technologies holds the promise for greater accuracy and increased awareness. Currently, they are not being used optimally to inform service members about their retirement pay and benefits. The over abundance and complexity of websites on this topic have been counterproductive to drawing in their intended audience. This has been a major contributor to the failure of the military retirement information systems.

The primary recommendation is for web-based solutions that consist of active and passive components. Merely providing an online repository of military retirement compensation information, no matter how comprehensive, will fail to get the word out by itself. A "push" component would entice and direct service members to be actively involved and seek out the information. Whether through the Office of Secretary of the

Defense (OSD) directives, through service chiefs' translations of Joint policy, or through the use of a DoD-wide information-awareness campaign, leading the proverbial horse to water is just as important as making the water available.

All the service branches employ some sort of annual or bi-annual online training requirements. This may afford an ideal push-pull forum to educate officers about military retirement that may not have been feasible as early as the beginning of this decade. An inter-service, centrally managed website offers an economy-of-scale savings and a consistency of information standardization. Individual branches can tailor the periodicity for their officer corps.

This report recommends that, at a minimum, military retirement education via the tools mentioned above be done with every promotion level. Current promotion structures would ensure that officers would receive at least four opportunities to refresh their knowledge of military retirement benefits before the critical tipping point in their careers. This will help maximize the perceived value of military retirement at these natural career milestones.

C.   FURTHER STUDY

The scope of this report precluded delving into many unanswered, interesting questions that arose in the course of this research. The following questions are offered for further study:

- What is the Cost-Benefit Analysis of Annual/General Military Training requirements on military retirement compensation?
- Are there similar correlations for the enlisted ranks?
- What is the valuation of individual military retirement information deficiency?
- Why are female awareness levels so low in light of published lower discount rates for females?
- Why do prior enlisted officers have such extraordinary high military retirement knowledge levels?
- What was the root cause for service-specific variances (e.g., why the Marine Corps scored so high and the Coast Guard scored so low)?

APPENDIX – SURVEY OPEN COMMENTS (VERBATIM)

Question 29	SECTION IV: Recommendations and Inputs Please tell us about any other sources for military retirement information not mentioned in this survey:
#	Response
1	Regualr news media sometimes publish inormation about military benefits.
2	Some of this was N/A for me, but I was unable to select. For example, TAP and PRESEP classes should be N/A for most of your population I would imagine. Same for those that don't blog or read Navy times. You don't really know if the answer is a low priority, or if it's not applicable.
3	TSP contributions, Troops to teachers among other programs that are available to retirees and detaching SVMs.
4	Congressional Quarterly
5	None that I am aware of.
6	I wrote down all the ones I saw on this survey... I didn't know about half of them!
7	My enlisted recruiter educated me on possible retirement benefits. Retirement benefits were discussed/trained on more in the enlisted community. Since I received my commission I have NEVER had an officer in my COC discuss benefits of any kind with me. I have taken the responsbility upon myself to educate officers who don't have prior E time of what they have available to them.
8	none that I know of
9	MILPERSMAN (nice to read the actual regulations); Commercial press: Marketplace; Command career counseler retention briefings
10	OSD Military Compensation website www.defenselink.mil
11	None
12	Congressional and Senator's offices often have a staff position for veteran's affairs that have information on military retirement.
13	Briefs received at ROTC.
14	DFAS retirement calculator page
15	n/a
16	None.
17	Discussed as part of financial analysis in IW4500.
18	Training briefs by Navy professional Organizations i.e. Supply Corps Associations holds training on these topics at various Navy bases.
19	Obviously I don't know much about military retirement, therefore no other sources.
20	LES
21	This website contributed the most to my knowledge about retirement and should be mandatory for anyone considering getting out before retirement: http://www.dod.mil/cgi-bin/finalpayhigh3.pl
22	MarineLink
23	This shows me how much I don't know about retirerment, please help me.
24	None
25	none
26	AAFRTS

27	none
28	Spouse who is retired military, learned alot from all their required briefs/seminars/medical screening during the retirment preparation phase 6 months before the retirement date.
29	I read the MARADMIN messages when REDUX was first implemented.
30	First Command Financial Services
31	Relatives who have served and have retired.
32	MOAA
33	National Guard Almanac very good info source.
34	Don't know. I am not informed about retirement. I only know it is good and worth sticking it out.
35	No idea, please share the sources!
36	Official Navy Messages
37	Asa - I'll tell you about it at the KP reunion!
38	OSD site has some information (http://www.defenselink.mil/militarypay/survivor/index.html) - basically, google and then look for the most authoritative source. Sometimes seems as though our personnel websites are a little cumbersome. I don't know about the TAP/retirement breifs, as I haven't attended them.
39	none
40	none
41	None
42	It's all word of mouth for me!
43	Professors/instructors at educational/training institutions, i.e. Staff Academy (for enlisted Marines) or NPS.
44	None
45	none
46	I've relied mostly on the word-of-mouth info sources; but if I were consulting an on-line source, I would look to an official government source before a private source like military.com.
47	Detailer Road show.
48	There is a Guide to Military Retirement book you can purchase on amazon. I purchased a copy.
49	not applicable
50	No others.
51	Militiary Organizations - MOAA, Navy Mutual Aid Association, USAA, Financial Planners.
52	I have to say I do not know much about this at this point in my career because honestly, it just hasn't been important to me to know all the details. I know people I have served with that know exactly how much they're going to make in retirement each month, but it never interested me. I guess I figured I learn about it when the time came. Also, I would have choosen N/A on some of those questions that I ranked as 1. For instance, I think the TAP program will be helpful, but I haven't attended it yet ...very interesting survey.
53	For the commissioning source question, there should be a choice "doesn't matter" because I wasn't commissioned through either source.
54	none
55	MOAA, AARP
56	I had a wardroom brief from another Navy Officer on military retirement benefits about 5 years ago, but the impression I got was that it was a constantly changing system and even if I committed all the information to memory then, it would probably change a bunch before I hit retirement qualification over 15 years later.
57	MOAA magazine has been very informative on the changes - for the good and the bad

Question 30	Please let us know how YOU would want the Department of Defense to communicate or make available military retirement information to service members:
#	Response
1	DoD should use the NKO website (or other neutral website for all services) to post all the retirement information...
2	Personnel (e.g., BUPERS) website.
3	Existing service / DoD websites
4	That might be a useful training, as opposed to STD or alcohol training every year.
5	post briefs on common websites
6	GMT- Help people understand wha they get if they stay in, unless the benafits are not as good as they are percieved to be.
7	I think they are currently doing a good job. I believe I know where to find the info, but I have not taken much initiative to look into all aspects of it and have instead relied more on word of mouth.
8	Place links (preferably one all inclusive link to all pertinent information) on LES.
9	All service members need to attend a live briefing with a real human speaker - don't leave this to NKO GMT or some other cheap way out... our troops deserve for their on the clock time to be dedicated to their education on retirement benefits.
10	After taking survey, I realize how much I do not know...I will be visiting military.com
11	Ensure 2 or 3 years prior to eligibility, that I'm aware of all....much like we do now. Classes, online, command counseling, etc. all would help depending on my work and schedule at that time.
12	GMT or command-sponsored briefs
13	I don't know
14	On my LES
15	Annual Briefings or a message directed AT THE MEMBER and not message traffic.
16	Via email or perhaps through automated record system showing progress toward retirement and links to resources
17	There should be classes offered during commissioning programs that explicitly spell out how retirement works so that Officers can make educated decisions on staying in. Right now this information is not covered in training.
18	On the bupers website or a websit accessible by retirees.
19	Include it on BUPERS website calculated for the individual.
20	Clear up the confusion, link my expected benefits to my ssn on DFAS. After I log in, let me tell the site when I expect to retire and at what rank. A small blurb at the bottom of my LES each month would also train me over time. "Based on your PBED, you will be enrolled in tricare prime when you retire" etc..
21	E-mail information updates or post it to a central APPROVED website.
22	When you sign your contract some info should be provided in regards to military retirement
23	DOD needs to make it easier for us to get information. There needs to be a simple consolidated website to go to. I didn't know half the answers to the questions you asked on the quiz... and I have almost 10 years in the Army!
24	Yearly update via GMT.
25	Website
26	Make it mandatory training...e.g. we have sit through "don't fall off your snowmobile" training while serving in Hawaii so why not make "these are your benefits" training mandatory for commands?
27	User friendly website dedicated to just retirement issues

28	One comprehensive booklet or website specifically designed for the military retiree would be best in my opinion.
29	Summary one page document/email passed out by command and/or available at the base finance office. This survey made me realize I'm not very knowledgeable on the details surrounding our retirement benefits.
30	Annual brochure mailed to your home
31	Messages via email that clearly state they pertain to retirement. Honestly, I am too far away from retirement to think much about the pay and benefits. Things may change between now and then, so why not wait.
32	Include information on the DFAS website; when someone logs on to check their LES the would also be exposed to valuable retirement information.
33	internet sites but keep it simple with drawdowns for more information.
34	Post retirement briefs (updated frequently) on MOL. Commands update Marines at least annually via briefs, PWPs, training, etc... Provide links to retirement information websites on MOL and DFAS.Mil (my pay)
35	Each branch should put on their wesites information IRT Retirement benefits in plain language broken out in what is expected and what is optional. Also show data examples of long term benefits of each retirement system (ie High 3, Redux etc...)
36	Annual/bi-annual statement of benefits similar to what Social Security Admin sends out.
37	Should be included in GMT. We get training on every aspect of the military but NO FORMAL TRAINING on our retirement benefits until separation classes (TAP, etc.). At this point it is too late to get sailors to "Stay Navy."
38	Staynavy.mil retirement calculator did it for me.
39	Updated information should be communicated through seminars and all information briefings/slides should also be available via the web.
40	A well laid out and publicized web page seems reasonable.
41	Consolidate information on one DoD website
42	Internet
43	one-stop website from navy.mil to cover all aspects -> must be a well-designed site, unlike the majority of current official military sites.
44	A basic briefing could be posted on the Army Knowledge Online (AKO) Portal
45	I feel as if the information is available out there if I was to look for it. I know just enough to help me decide to stay in until retirement.
46	Through portals or through clear optional training briefs such as powerpoint (answering common questions such as, "does my service academy time count for anything as far as retirement is concerned, and if not why?)
47	how about a militaryretirement.mil or .com website, a single one-stop official stop of retirement gouge.
48	Formal brief.
49	Provide online ppt presentation at BUPERS or NKO.
50	email / reliable source brief via AF Times / Army Times / Navy times / post on myaf/AKO or service equivilant website / brief once reaching a point of decsion (15 yr REDUX choice vs High 3)
51	A tailored program similar to the annual Social Security Benefits report each SSN holder receives. It should detail: 1. Your benefits if you were to retire today (if eligible); 2. Your benefits if you were to retire at 20yrs, 25yrs, 30yrs.
52	Web-based GMT would be ideal. We can get the training whenever we want, show it ot our spouses, and not have to worry about missing the raining (if it's classroom based, and you miss it, you would have to wait a year.
53	Mandatory Briefings

54	official websites
55	Newsletter Emails
56	Annual training via command intranet. Combine all navy websites on NKO or equivalent site.
57	Simple chart on AKO/DKO. Fill out your service information and retirement planning goals, and the chart provides feedback. Standard retirement info can be posted on the AKO/DKO Homepage for one-stop shopping. -Sort of like a knowledge management program using a Wiki.
58	website
59	Memo
60	I'm so far from retirement, I haven't begun to investigate thoroughly. I haven't served my initial time owed from commissioning (plus I'm accruing more time owed now) so I don't yet have the option to separate. So I have done little to no research on the subject.
61	Bupers needs to brief at the fleet concentration areas and focus on certain year groups at key times in the officers / service member's career. Members should have the opportunity to sit down with a "Retirement Rep" and ask questions.
62	Provide or link access to retire calculators based on total years of service
63	A one-stop shop site for military benefits and alowances would be appreciated, It seems now that there are several sites that discuss these subjects. I have not sought out answers since it seems they are all over the place. Also, I am not certain how well the various sources pair up with one another (i.e. is there "bad" information out there on any of these sites).
64	official websites
65	I'm confident the information is out there for those seeking it.
66	Annual briefings, just like we have to have for ethics training, sexual harrassment training, etc. Benefits briefs should be a mandatory annual event, too!
67	A newsletter (email) to all officers about the benefits. Use the Bottom Line approach to structure it- we dont have the time to do a bunch of research on legal jargon and other stuff. Make it simple and to the point
68	A very simple website linked to Marine On-Line (MOL) with calculators, etc.
69	Briefs from HR personnel.
70	Either some types of mailing (detailed package on benifits) or a class. No sure, it is hard for people that are not near retirement age to think about it or find info.
71	Perhaps at a certain time in service, say 15 years, service members attend an information brief that explains the retirement program and its benefits.
72	Web site is the bst way
73	It's called TAP class! I thought it was mandatory...right?
74	To me, the information is irrelevant at this point in time.
75	All of the relevant information should be compiled in a single document and then directly emailed to me.
76	Send me an email or mail me a brochure.
77	Annual Training CBT
78	?
79	Either a website dedicated to military retirement or information about how to get to a current website dedicated to military retirement.
80	NKO would be nice or on NPC site.
81	civilian job hunters/corporate HR personnel of potential future employers
82	recording on iTunes

83	increase in Transition Assistance Program type course offerings. Maybe a "TAP-light" program that focuses only on the benefits of retirement would be useful for folks on the fence about retirement.
84	Target servicemembers at key decision points for briefing. Retirement benefits should be a counseling topic around the 10 year mark.
85	For my own use, the Internet is the best resource (IF it is a simple enough interface - not to complicated to get the right answer in 5 minutes or less).
86	none
87	A link on BUPERS/NPC would be great. Make people available and contact information known for those that can answer questions.
88	Open, honest, accurate forum like website or annual online training.
89	I'm in front of a terminal all day trapped under the lease of telecommunications devices. Face to face interaction is preferred with website, phone, and email follow-up at my discretion.
90	Easy to find links off of the service websites (ie. www.usmc.mil)
91	Publish it along with that crazy how much do you really make statement that goes out every year.
92	yearly mandatory training presentation web based
93	Just let us know the current facts and how they change. It would help to get this to the O-3 level and below and explain it in understandable terms. It needs to be couched in a manner that makes a service member want to learn, too. Field grades and up need to remember where they were/ their state of mind before they decided to retire. This would better inform the JO's and potentially increase retention.
94	Through a internet site created specifically for retirement.
95	Ensure the recruiters tell the TRUTH.
96	Checklist for Retirement from BUPERS. Too many sources of information; need simple BUPERS navigator page.
97	Concise booklet provided at commissioning and at 15 year mark prior to retirement plan selection.
98	DoD lets me know every year that retirees mean nothing to them when they lobby Congress to cut their Tri-care benefits.
99	A simple email that I can actually understand. Perhaps an equally simple pamphlet.
100	Though people would not like it, if it were a training topic that had to be reported completed off ship, the knowledge would get out. But either way it needs to be focused on those just entering the navy to get them to stick it out (to change their mindset from the beginning). Instead of it being part of the processing out class in which case it is too late to get most people to stay in. Most ships will not have the time or available officers to to send to a class or seminar or brief if the info was put out that way. So it would be a waste of money go that route.
101	Put all the information in one spot, too many things change and we don't know about it.
102	Have a quick brief every year or every time you transfer duty staions to explain the benefits of military retirement. This may even keep some people in that would normally get out.
103	Send out updated benefit information annually via email.
104	have a link on the military pay website to the information about retirement pay.
105	More articles in official magazines. All Hands etc,
106	Consolidate all sources into 1 website/source with all documentation. Bypass all the different spins placed on interpretation of documents which only focus on certain parts of the documents. Put it all in one spot, tell the service memebers where it is at and let us do our own reading.

107	While most people are too young to care as soon as they enter the service (and they don't know if they want to stay), it might be beneficial to at least cover the general aspects so they have information on which to make decisions. I don't think it should be "mandatory" training. Maybe on some "down days"/training days, personnel could offer a voluntary retirement benefits brief for information (not every time, maybe 1-2x a year?). I think people are savvy enough to know where to find it - but it's nice to have someone brief you the highlights, especially during the mid-point of a career when you are thinking about whether to stay or go.
108	Just make it more clear - the normal means are fine but make the details clear and understandable (all the loopholes as well).
109	Dedicated web site.
110	Simplify current system and info.
111	I haven't actually looked for information. I'm sure a detailed faq would spell it out.
112	A simple chart with lots of pictures.
113	Stop making it purposely difficult to determine what the benefits are and consolidate it into one, easy to read, pamphlet. It can be broken down into healthcare, retirement pay, and other benefits.
114	Websites that are SIMPLE and straight forward.
115	It would be great if there were a website that was very user friendly that would allow you navigate to your answer in 3 clicks or less.
116	Have a "half-way point" course around the 10 year mark to inform members more about the specifics to retirement. The TAP class is great but comes late in the career.
117	Navy Times
118	DoD gets beat out by outside sources when it comes to putting out information. Military retirement is a big carrot that is used, but very little is known about it.
119	Maybe a "Retirement for Dummies" guide that'd serve us at the mid-career mark so we can better plan our future.
120	One publication, one website to provide general information. Listed here (links?) would be the central retirees' office associated with each service (this office should include active duty uniformed personnel). Single communication/explanation source from these offices/publications should be expert individuals speaking at transition briefs (in other words, retain and improve upon exisiting TAP/TAMPs classes). Make these briefs a regular occurance for ALL servicemembers at any time, not just 4-14 months before retirement. Much of this appears to be in place in some fashion, but overall it needs to be refined and SIMPLY communicated for all servicemembers AND spouses.
121	MY PAY SHOULD DETAIL YOUR BENIFITS TOWARD RETIREMENT. YOUR PAYCHECK UNDER YOUR CURRENT CHOICE IE APR 30 END OF THE MONTH LES SHOWS MY PAY AND THE PAY OF EQUAL GRADE RETIMENT PAY LES.
122	internet
123	A simple (clear), authoritative, all-inclusive booklet should be published each year with applicable updates. This would assist officers and senior enlisted motivate troops to stay in the military as well as keep us informed of all the nuances associated with the retirement system.
124	A website or pamphlet would be fine by me.
125	It needs to be an easy to understand format.
126	TAP class is important but extremely late to learn about it. I don't know. Honestly, I really don't know where to look. But, I will start hunting when I reach the 15 year point. Right now, I know it is out there and it is better than anything else I can get within 10 years. So, I will take what I get now and will start researching more later when it is nearer the horizon.
127	Put together a pamphlet and make them available on ships.
128	I think it's out there for people who need it, I just haven't bothered to look yet.
129	An electronic handbook or pamphlet as a .pdf that can be downloaded.

130	N/A
131	Service Message traffic, website, and briefings
132	FAQ webpage
133	Periodic career/benefits briefings: perhaps 1/year, mandatory for those officers new to a command, optional as a refresher for those who have had it at that command. (Or any similar idea.) Of course, FFSC already has good info for those who take the time to think about it and seek answers themselves.
134	Put the information in a single location on a military website that operates at high bandwidth. Additionally, put as much of the information as possible in bullet format and minimize the use of hyperlinks taking to another page.
135	either via email (preferably not spam) or a dedicated website that is easy to use...unlike the current Bupers/NKO nonsense.
136	Send a link of FAQ's answering all the questions/facts we tend to misconstrue. Those that desire the info will use it...
137	Require annual training? You can lead the horse to water.....The ones that ask shall find. Or send out the retiremnet info pack electronically to members at navy.mil or recoreded "home" email addresses.
138	https://militaryretirement.com
139	publish on all resources available
140	i think they should have seminars for people who have 8-12 years in who are undecided about whether or not to get out and not just during TAP classes. Or maybe it should be part of one of the monthly GMTs that are required. Websites are helpful as well as the DoD magazines (All Hands, Link, etc)
141	Easy to read pamphlet or website. Often military information contains too much "regulation speak". I dont have the time or desire to weed through that.
142	Written literature
143	Continue to improve the ease of use of Marinenet, NKO and other online services. Sponsor some sort of chatroom or social network like facebook to facilitate questions and answers.
144	Info should be on AFPC only.
145	Their own completely different website. Everything else is too hard to dig for out of currrent websites.
146	Have this info available on a website (and it probably already is.) Make it interactive, so I can go in and answer a few questions about my career and what my retirement goals are, and then have the information adjust to my responses. It should also give me options based on the data I've inputted ...for instance, if you inputted you're going to stay "x" number of years, this will be your retirement options vs however, if you stay "x" number of years, these will be your options.
147	Through Marine OnLine...all Marines have an account
148	The information is available for those that wish to research it.
149	By several avenues. Navy Times, All Hands, and various publications. I haven't been to TAP, but I think it's vitally important. It would also be important to get that information earlier in your career when you might be deciding if you are going to stay to 20 years. Counseling sessions for Sailors at key times (prior to reenlistment) would be beneficial. Presentations by HR experts at venues like safety stand downs might break up the monotony of the safety lectures and provide a forum to ask questions. Like most messages, the information has to be delivered in several ways, several times to truly educate the masses.
150	Website if not done already.
151	I'm not close enough to retirement to seek out information.
152	Service portal (Air Force Portal)
153	required training
154	Seminars at the various points in the career paths. Every 5 years(normally when people would be getting to a decision point of staying or getting out)

155	Include in GMT
156	Specifically designed website like Stay Navy
157	A single comprehensive website with FAQs and downloadable/printable information pamphlets/booklets. The link should be readily available from all service portal websites.
158	retirement workshop or comprehensive website. teach us before we have to attend TAP.
159	Provide summary on Mypay website or service personnel websites.
160	Mandatory training like GMT
161	One stop shopping web source.
162	An on-line calculator would be interesting. You could enter your service dates, expected rank, and time in grade to get an estimated summary of benefits and what you could do to increase them....stay longer, etc.
163	Mentorship. Senior members should discuss these thigns during regular counseling. Normally, retirement information isn't made available until the member has decided to separate (ie. TAP class)
164	DoD has mandatory training for everything from CMEO to Cybersecurity...why not include military retirement benefits. It would probably help retention.
165	email to member, set up mandatory appointment to discuss intentions
166	include a line in LES stating retirement eligibility date and %Basic at 20, 25, 30 yrs. but I'm DHS (USCG) not DOD.
167	Email, or annual letters like social security administration sends
168	A website dedicated to general information on retirement pay and benefit issues.
169	Why not educate members annually through required training such as GMT?
170	thru BUPERS website
171	I know the information is available. Maybe a general note (NAVADMIN) can be sent out to tell us where the sources are.
172	Through transistion points and possibly periodic briefs throughout the career.
173	lecture
174	Maybe in required GMT, since I won't really care about it for myself until I'm nearing 20 years of service due to the probability of something changing at the last minute.
175	The bottom of the LES has been very handy for short bits of information
176	Through Air Force Portal

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